



THE WORLD CRISIS

1911-1918

*VOLUME II*





THE  
WORLD CRISIS  
1911—1918

*by*

THE RT. HON.  
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*VOLUME II*

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# CONTENTS

## *PART II (Continued)*

1915

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIV THE FIRST DEFEAT OF THE U-BOATS . . .	719
XV THE INCREASING TENSION . . . . .	737
XVI THE BATTLE OF THE BEACHES . . . . .	750
XVII AFTER THE LANDING . . . . .	766
XVIII THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT . . . . .	784
XIX THE EFFORT OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION . . .	815
XX THE DARKENING SCENE . . . . .	839
XXI THE BATTLE OF SUVLA BAY . . . . .	858
XXII THE RUIN OF THE BALKANS . . . . .	878
XXIII THE ABANDONMENT OF THE DARDANELLES . .	900
XXIV THE CONSEQUENCES OF 1915 . . . . .	917

## *PART III*

1916-1918

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE HIGH COMMAND . . . . .	935
II THE BLOOD TEST . . . . .	950
III FALKENHAYN'S CHOICE . . . . .	974
IV VERDUN . . . . .	992
V JUTLAND: THE PRELIMINARIES . . . . .	1012
VI JUTLAND: THE ENCOUNTER . . . . .	1033
VII THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME . . . . .	1070
VIII THE ROUMANIAN DISASTER . . . . .	1093
IX THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNITED STATES . .	1110
X A POLITICAL INTERLUDE . . . . .	1128

*PART III (Continued)*

1916-1918

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI GENERAL'S NIVELLE'S EXPERIMENT . . .	1147
XII AT THE MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS . . .	1170
XIII THE MUNITIONS BUDGET . . . . .	1185
XIV THE AUTUMN STRUGGLE . . . . .	1206
XV BRITAIN CONQUERS THE U-BOATS . . . . .	1222
XVI THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION IN THE WEST . . .	1249
XVII THE TWENTY-FIRST OF MARCH . . . . .	1275
XVIII THE CLIMAX . . . . .	1297
XIX THE SURPRISE OF THE CHEMIN DES DAMES . . .	1315
XX THE UNFOUGHT CAMPAIGN . . . . .	1333
XXI THE TURN OF THE TIDE . . . . .	1353
XXII THE TEUTONIC COLLAPSE . . . . .	1368
XXIII VICTORY . . . . .	1383

*APPENDIXES*

G THE STATE OF THE NAVY, MAY, 1915 . . . . .	1405
H FIRST LORD'S MINUTES . . . . .	1413
I LORD FISHER'S RESIGNATION . . . . .	1423
J BRITISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN CASUALTY RETURNS	1427
K ALLY AND GERMAN BATTLESHIP STRENGTH, 1917 . . .	1431
L MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS COUNCIL, 1917-18 . . .	1433
M MUNITION MINUTES, 1917 . . . . .	1434
N MECHANICAL POWER IN THE OFFENSIVE . . . . .	1441
O TANK MINUTES . . . . .	1451
INDEX . . . . .	1455

## MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
The Turkish Theatre . . . . .	752
Helles . . . . .	760-1
Anzac and Suvla Bay . . . . .	861
The Balkan Peninsula . . . . .	887
The War Fronts, January, 1916 . . . . .	988-9
Verdun, the first phase, February 21, 1916 . . . . .	1000
The Battle of Jutland, 2.30 p.m. . . . .	1023
The Battle Cruiser Action, 3.50 p.m. . . . .	1027
Enemy Battleships in Sight, 4.40 p.m. . . . .	1030
The Turn to the North, 5 p.m. . . . .	1031
Deployment Diagrams . . . . .	1039
The Meeting, 5.30 p.m. . . . .	1042
The Deployment, 6.19 p.m. . . . .	1045
Scheer's first turn away, 6.35 p.m. . . . .	1050
Scheer's second turn away at 7.12 p.m. to 7.20 p.m. . . . .	1051
Darkness Falls at 9 p.m. . . . .	1053
Position of the Fleets at 9 p.m. . . . .	1055
August 19, 1916, North Sea . . . . .	1062-3
Diagram showing Section of Warship . . . . .	1066
Somme . . . . .	1079
Salonika . . . . .	1099
Roumanian Campaign, 1916. The Beginning . . . . .	1102-3
Roumanian Campaign, 1916. The End . . . . .	1106-7
General Nivelle's Experiment, April 16-May, 5, 1917 . . . . .	1165
Chart showing production of guns and gun carriages, 1914-1918 . . . . .	1190-1
Cambrai . . . . .	1219

Comparison between numbers of German submarines destroyed by different types of ships . . . . .	1232
Diagram illustrating the incidence of the Convoy System on British Mercantile sinkings . . . . .	1240-1
Comparison between Losses and Output of Merchant Ship- building . . . . .	1244-5
Gross Tonnage of Allied and Neutral Merchant and Fishing Vessels sunk by Submarines, etc. . . . .	1246-7
March 21, 1918 . . . . .	1283
Munition Losses (Facsimile) . . . . .	1294-5
Lys and Kemmel Offensives . . . . .	1299
Sir Douglas Haig's 'Back to the Wall' Order (Facsimile) .	1303
The surprise of the Chemin des Dames . . . . .	1319
The Battle of Noyon . . . . .	1322
The Battle of Rhcims . . . . .	1362
The Western Front . . . . .	1386-7
The American Victory of St. Mihiel . . . . .	1389
Situation on September 25, 1918 . . . . .	1392-3
British Battles during 1918 . . . . .	1395

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The maps illustrating the Battle of Jutland are based, by permission of the Stationery Office, on those printed in the Official Narrative.

## PART II 1915

*Continued*

### CHAPTER XIV

#### THE FIRST DEFEAT OF THE U-BOATS

Chronology—Larger Submarines: Pre-war Strength—the Unknown Factors—Lord Fisher's Memorandum of 1913—the Admiralty View—Peculiarities of the Submarine Weapon—Guns in Submarines—Efficiency of the British Submarine Service—German Declaration of February 4, 1915: Threat of U-boat War on Commerce—My Statement to the House of Commons—Admiralty Exertions—Decisions of February 11—Protection of the Channel Communications—Arming the Trawler Fleet—The Search for Guns—The Mosquito Fleet—The Indicator Nets—The Decoy Ships—February 18: The U-Boat Attack begins—Its Failure—Losses of the Germans—The Straits of Dover Barrier—April and May: Failure confirmed—The Blockade Controversy with the United States—Gravity of the Issue—Sir Edward Grey's Patience and Conciliation.

**C**HRONOLOGY is the key to narrative. Yet where a throng of events are marching abreast, it is inevitable that their progress should be modified by selection and classification. Some must stand on one side until the main press is over; others, taking advantage of any interlude, may hasten forward to periods beyond the general account.

During all the operations at the Dardanelles which a series of chapters has described, the general naval war was proceeding unceasingly. The Grand Fleet still watched its antagonists with tireless vigilance. The Cabinet still laboured to perfect and maintain the Blockade against the enemy on the sea and the lawyers across the ocean. A stream of reinforcements and supplies flowed incessantly to France. And lastly, the Admiralty had been called upon to protect the merchant fleets of Britain from a novel and unprecedented form of attack. The first U-boat campaign had begun, and to narrate this episode in an intelligible form it is necessary to look back into the past and to advance somewhat before our time into the future.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I went to the Admiralty in 1911 we had 57 submarines (11 A's already obsolete, 11 B's, 33 C's, and 2 D's) compared to the German 15; but all our submarines, except the 2 D's, were of a class only capable of operating a short distance from their own coasts. They could not accompany the Fleet, nor make long independent voyages at sea; whereas 11 out of the German 15



were at least as good as our 2 D's. During the three years of preparation for which I was responsible, the submarine service was under Commodore Keyes. As early as 1912 we had begun to visualize in the over-sea submarine a new method of maintaining the close blockade of the German ports which was no longer possible by means of destroyers and surface craft. We therefore sought continually to build larger submarines of 'over-sea' or even 'ocean-going' capacity. We developed the E class and one or two other vessels of an even larger type. Great technical difficulties were encountered, and the delays of the contractors and of the Admiralty departments were vexatious in the extreme. The larger type was entirely experimental, and there were not wanting experts who doubted whether the technical difficulties of submerging vessels above a certain size could be surmounted. In addition, owing to the contracts which had been made, practically assigning the monopoly of submarine building to one particular firm, we were at first considerably hampered even in our experimental work. In 1912, on the recommendation of Commodore Keyes, we decided to break these fettering contracts and to place orders for submarines of different patterns on the Clyde and on the Tyne. We also purchased Italian and French submarines, in order to learn all that could be known of their design. Progress was, however, extremely slow, and beset by doubt at every stage.

At the outbreak of the war we had altogether 74 submarines built, 31 building, and 14 ordered or projected. The Germans had 33 built and 28 building. But of the British total of 74 built, only 18 (8 E's and 10 D's) were over-sea boats, whereas of the 33 German submarines built no fewer than 28 were 'over-sea' vessels. The situation therefore was that we had a large force of submarines for the defence of our shores against invasion and for the protection of our harbours; but we had not enough 'over-sea' boats to maintain a continuous complete Submarine Blockade of the Heligoland Bight; nor so many of this class as the Germans.

It would be affectation to pretend that we were contented with this state of affairs. On the other hand, it is probable that if we had launched out into an enormous scheme of submarine building before the war, we should have stimulated to an equal, or perhaps greater, extent a corresponding German programme. This would have exposed us to dangers which could never have been compensated by an increase in the number of British submarines. It may well be that all was for the best.

Neither the British nor the German Admiralty understood at the outbreak of hostilities all that submarines could do. It was not until these weapons began to be used under the stern conditions of war that their extraordinary sea-keeping capacity became apparent. It was immediately found on both sides that the larger

class of submarines could remain at sea alone and unaided for eight or ten days at a time without breaking the endurance of their crews. These periods were rapidly doubled and trebled in both Navies. So far from having to return to port in bad weather, it appeared that submarines could ride out a gale better than any other class of vessel. Tried as they were forthwith to the extreme limit of human courage and fortitude, the skilled, highly trained, highly educated officers, sailors and engineers who manned them responded with incredible devotion.

Before the war what submarines could do was one mystery. What they would be ordered to do was another.

At the end of 1913, Lord Fisher, then unemployed, wrote his celebrated memorandum on the probable use by the Germans of submarines against commerce, and declared that they would certainly not hesitate to sink merchant vessels which they could not bring into port as required by the laws of war. The memorandum owed a great deal to the technical knowledge of Captain S. S. Hall, who was one of Lord Fisher's intimate followers; but the vision of the old Admiral governed and dominated the argument. I caused this memorandum to be immediately considered by the Sea Lords and by the technical departments.

Neither the First Sea Lord nor I shared Lord Fisher's belief that the Germans would use submarines for sinking unarmed merchantmen without challenge or any means of rescuing the crews. It was abhorrent to the immemorial law and practice of the sea. Prince Louis wrote to me that Lord Fisher's brilliant paper 'was marred by this suggestion.' I must not hesitate to print documents which tell against my judgment, such as it was. On January 1, 1914, I wrote as follows to Lord Fisher:—

'I have read and re-read with the closest attention the brilliant and most valuable paper on Submarines which you have drawn up for the Admiralty, and I have requested my naval colleagues to study it forthwith.

'There are a few points on which I am not convinced. Of these the greatest is the question of the use of submarines to sink merchant vessels. I do not believe this would ever be done by a civilized Power.' I proceeded to compare such outrages with the spreading of pestilence and the assassination of individuals. 'These are frankly unthinkable propositions, and the excellence of your paper is, to some extent, marred by the prominence assigned to them.

'Like you, I am disquieted about our submarine development, and it is clear that in the near future we must make an effort on a greatly increased scale to counter the enormous

programmes in which Germany has been indulging for the last 6 years. . . .'

But if we did not believe that a civilized nation would ever resort to such a practice, we were sure that if they did, they would unite the world against them. In particular it seemed certain that a Power offending in this way would be unable to distinguish between enemy and neutral ships, and that mistakes would be made which, quite apart from moral indignation, would force powerful neutrals to declare war upon a pirate nation. In his diagnosis of the German character Lord Fisher was right and the Admiralty was wrong. But even if we had adopted his view it is not easy to see what particular action could have been taken before the war to guard against such an attack.

The submarine is the only vessel of war which does not fight its like. This is not to say that combats have not taken place between submarines, but these are exceptional and usually inconclusive. It follows therefore that the submarine fleet on one side ought not to be measured against the submarine fleet on the other. Its strength should be regulated not according to the number of enemy submarines, but according to your own war plan and the special circumstances of your country. If Germany had had four times as many submarines at the beginning of the war than was in fact the case, she would have gained a great advantage and placed us immediately in serious danger. It would have been no answer to this danger to have multiplied our submarines by four, nor should we have exposed Germany to an equal danger had we done so.

\* \* \* \* \*

In judging these questions, regard must be had to the immense changes and advances in naval science and invention which took place in the years of war. Everything must be weighed in relation to the knowledge and circumstances of the actual time. For instance, before the war I consistently discouraged the use of guns in submarines, whereas in the later phases of the war great injury was inflicted upon us by the guns of German submarines, our own submarines developed a regular gun armament, and we even built a submarine to carry a 12-inch gun. But this was explained by entirely new purposes and new conditions which subsequently came into view. If the German submarines had confined themselves to attacking vessels of war, they would not have found any use for their petty guns and would have relied solely upon the fateful torpedo. It was only when they began to war on defenceless, or almost defenceless, merchantmen that their consumption of torpedoes became prohibitive and they realized that gunfire would achieve their purpose in many cases equally

well. It was only when the science of submarine building had advanced sufficiently and the unlimited funds of war were available that we were able to build a submarine large enough to carry a 12-inch gun in the hopes that it would pop up all of a sudden and fire a great shell into the hull of an unsuspecting light cruiser. A superficial and anachronistic critic may easily declare that the policy of arming submarines with guns was right, and that those who opposed it were wrong. I rest, however, on my opinion that guns should not be put into submarines for the purpose of attacking warships, including other submarines, unless the gun can be of such a size that it would produce results as decisive as those of the torpedo; and I find confirmation from the fact that no warship was ever sunk during the war by the gunfire of a submarine; and that of the hundreds of trawlers, many armed merely with a 3-pdr. gun, only two were sunk in their continuous conflict with submarines.

\* \* \* \* \*

If I resist any impeachment of the Boards of Admiralty over whom I presided for their Submarine policy before the war, still less will I admit that the British Submarine Service was in any way inferior in skill or enterprise to that of Germany. On the contrary, I claim and will adduce proofs that their exploits proved them month by month incontestably superior. But they suffered from one overwhelming disadvantage which it was not in our power to remove, viz., a dearth of targets. Except for a few sudden dashes to sea by fast vessels, the occasional unexpected voyage of a single cruiser, or a carefully prepared, elaborately protected, swiftly executed parade of the High Sea Fleet, the German Navy remained locked in its torpedo-proof harbours; and outside of the Baltic all German commerce was at an end. On the other hand, every sea was crowded with British merchant craft—dozens of large vessels arriving and departing every day, while our fleets were repeatedly in the open sea and our patrolling cruisers and merchant cruisers maintained a constant and unbroken watch and distant blockade. If the positions had been reversed and had we permitted ourselves to attack defenceless merchantmen, far more formidable results would have been achieved. Nor is this a matter of assertion. It is capable of proof. As will be seen when the exploits of British submarines in the Sea of Marmora are recounted, one submarine alone—E11—three times passed and re-passed through the terrible dangers of the tenfold minefields, of the Nagara net, and of the long vigilantly guarded reaches of the Dardanelles, remained in the Marmora ninety-six days (forty-seven in one spell) and sunk single-handed 101 vessels, including

a battleship, a modern destroyer and three gunboats. This prodigious feat of Commander Nasmith, V.C., though closely rivalled by that of Commander Boyle, V.C., in E14, remains unsurpassed in the history of submarine warfare.

\* \* \* \* \*

On February 4, 1915, the German Admiralty issued the following declaration:—

'All the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland, including the whole of the English Channel, are hereby declared to be a war zone. From February 18 onwards every enemy merchant vessel found within this war zone will be destroyed without its being always possible to avoid danger to the crews and passengers.

'Neutral ships will also be exposed to danger in the war zone, and in view of the misuse of neutral flags ordered on January 31 by the British Government,' and owing to unforeseen incidents to which naval warfare is liable, it is impossible to avoid attacks being made on neutral ships in mistake for those of the enemy.'

We were now confronted with the situation which Lord Fisher had foreseen in his Memorandum of 1913. The event did not, however, cause the Admiralty serious alarm. Our information showed that the Germans could not possess more than twenty to twenty-five submarines capable of blockading the British Isles. As these could only work in three reliefs, not more than seven or eight were likely to be at work simultaneously; and having regard to the enormous volume of traffic moving in and out of the very numerous ports of the United Kingdom, it seemed certain that no appreciable effect would in fact be produced upon our trade, provided always that our ships continued boldly to put to sea. On the other hand, we were sure that the German declaration and the inevitable accidents to neutrals arising out of it would offend and perhaps embroil the United States: and that in any case our position for enforcing the blockade would be greatly strengthened. We looked forward to a sensible abatement of the pressure which the American Government was putting upon us to relax our system of blockade, and we received a whole armoury of practical arguments with which to reinforce our side of the contention. We consulted long and carefully together at the Admiralty on successive days, and thereafter I announced that we would publish every week the sinkings of merchant vessels effected by the German submarines, together with the numbers of ships entering and leaving British ports.

<sup>1</sup> We had authorized recourse to this time-honoured naval stratagem, knowing well the embarrassment it would cause to the enemy submarines.

In my speech on the naval estimates on February 15, I used the following words:—

The tasks which lie before us are anxious and grave. We are, it now appears, to be the object of a kind of warfare which has never before been practised by a civilized State. The scuttling and sinking at sight, without search or parley, of merchant ships by submarine agency is a wholly novel and unprecedented departure. It is a state of things which no one had ever contemplated, and which would have been universally reprobated and repudiated before this War. But it must not be supposed because the attack is extraordinary that a good defence and a good reply cannot be made. The statutes of ancient Rome contained no provision for the punishment of parricide, but when the first offender appeared, it was found that satisfactory arrangements could be made to deal with him. Losses no doubt will be incurred—of that I give full warning—but we believe that no vital injury can be done. If our traders put to sea regularly and act in the spirit of the gallant captain of the merchant ship *Laertes*, whose well-merited honour has been made public this morning, and if they take the precautions which are proper and legitimate, we expect that the losses will be confined within manageable limits, even at the outset, when the enemy must be expected to make his greatest effort to produce an impression.

All losses can, of course, be covered by resort on the part of the shipowners to the Government insurance scheme, the rates of which are now one-fifth of what they were at the outbreak of War. On the other hand, the reply which we shall make will not perhaps be wholly inflective. Germany cannot be allowed to adopt a system of open piracy and murder, or what has always hitherto been called open piracy and murder, on the high seas, while remaining herself protected by the bulwark of international instruments which she has utterly repudiated and defied, and which we, much to our detriment, have respected. There are good reasons for believing that the economic pressure which the Navy exerts is beginning to be felt in Germany. We have, to some extent, restricted their imports of useful commodities like copper, petrol, rubber, nickel, manganese, antimony, which are needed for the efficient production of war materials, and for carrying on modern war on a great scale. The tone of the German Chancellor's remarks, and the evidences of hatred and anger against this country which are so apparent in the German Press, encourage us to believe that this restriction is proving inconvenient. We shall, of course, redouble our efforts to make it so. So far, however, we have not attempted to stop

imports of food. We have not prevented neutral ships from trading direct with German ports. We have allowed German exports in neutral ships to pass unchallenged. The time has come when the enjoyment of these immunities by a State which has, as a matter of deliberate policy, placed herself outside all international obligations, must be reconsidered. A further declaration on the part of the Allied Governments will promptly be made which will have the effect for the first time of applying the full force of naval pressure to the enemy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile at the Admiralty we made the most strenuous exertion to increase our resources for meeting the attack and to devise every method of countering it. I presided myself over the Conferences which were held, and on the 11th issued the following Minute:—

*February 11, 1915.*

Secretary,  
First Sea Lord,  
Third Sea Lord,  
Fourth Sea Lord,  
and others concerned.

The following seem to me to be the conclusions which should be drawn from our discussion yesterday:—

1. The first step should be the closing of the Straits of Dover by lines of nets drifting to and fro with the tide, and each section watched by its respective trawler and with a proper proportion of armed trawlers and destroyers to attack any submarine entangled. In this moving barrier there should be a gate through which traffic can be passed, and it appears necessary that this gate should be in a span not of indicator nets, but of anti-submarine nets. Traffic must be invariably directed to this gate, which should be so arranged as to force a submarine to come to the surface to pass through it. Destroyers and other armed craft should continually watch the approaches and passages through this gate, and be ready to attack any submarine showing on the surface.

The Actæon net would be suitable for this purpose, but Sir Arthur Wilson wishes also to use it for netting in Zeebrugge. Both services are urgent and important, and it should be carefully considered which should have priority, and how the deficiency can be supplied. It appears to me essential that if we are to maintain a complete barrier across the Straits we should have a plainly marked mode of passage open to traffic, which passage is not navigable by submarines submerged.

2. After the provision of the trawlers and drifters for the

Dover net barrier has been fully made, it would seem that the rest of the 120 small craft assigned to that area should be used as watchers on both sides of the barrier, being dotted about the sea so as to cover a belt 5 miles wide on the North Sea side of the barrier and 10 miles wide on the English Channel side of it. The duty of these unarmed craft is to report the presence of a submarine either approaching the barrier on the surface or entangled in the nets. The aim should be for the drifters to cover as much ground as possible in the English Channel so that submarines cannot find any quiet area. I do not know of any other duty which they can discharge. It would appear that they should be picketed out and anchored, and have a good and simple means of communicating the presence of a submarine, and a passing signal made by one of their number to the nearest watching destroyer or armed trawler in order that the vessel may be attacked.

Incidentally, this system of watching a belt will facilitate the safe passage of transports across the Straits both by day and night. It should be possible to get from them an hourly 'all clear' report. The dangers to transports are greatly reduced if submarines cannot lurk about and rise to the surface to take observations without being molested. I cannot think that more than 120 drifters and trawlers will be necessary for the Dover Service.

It appears to me to be possible to exaggerate the number of destroyers required. I should have thought that the present flotilla of the Admiral of the Dover Patrol, if left intact, would have been amply sufficient for the purpose, having regard to the other pressing demands upon this class of vessel.

3. After the Straits of Dover have been dealt with, the next demand on the indicator nets and net-laying drifters is to close in a similar manner the North Channel.<sup>1</sup> No gate would appear to be required here, as traffic has long ago been stopped.

4. Next in order of importance is the Southampton-Havre convoy route. It is not possible to provide wire nets at present for use against submarines operating on this route. The method adopted should be to watch the approaches for 25 miles out on each side by trawler pickets anchored or working in particular squares and provided with the means of making known the presence of a lurking submarine, as many as possible being armed. Outside the limits of these terminals the protection given to the transports must be by destroyers, who should, as found most convenient, either accompany specific transports or divisions of transports, or patrol up and down the route. Of the two courses the former would appear

<sup>1</sup> Between Scotland and Ireland.



to be preferable, as not limiting the transports to particular lines, and enabling them to zig-zag with greater freedom. Fishing nets should be laid in sections to embarrass submarines on the approaches on either side.

5. Next in order of importance is the watching of particular bays or sheltered places where enemy submarines may be supposed to rest, and the establishment of a watch near the Lizard. The number of trawlers and drifters assigned to this service by the Fourth Sea Lord might be reduced, the saving being taken for the North Channel.

6. It is not until all the above needs have been dealt with that an attempt should be made to net in the southern waters of the Irish Sea. This is a much larger business than any of the others, and will make an undue demand upon any resources of nets likely to be available in the near future. The establishment of an active patrol of yachts, trawlers, and drifters from Dublin is the best we can do in the present circumstances.

7. The following guns may be considered available for yachts, trawlers, and drifters:—

12-pdr. 12 cwt.	.	.	.	.	.	25
12 pdr. 8 cwt.	.	.	.	.	.	25
12-pdr. 4 cwt.	.	.	.	.	.	3
6-pdr. Nordenfelt	.	.	.	.	.	11
6-pdr. Hotchkiss	.	.	.	.	.	56
3-pdr. „	.	.	.	.	.	24

Any saluting 3-pdr. guns in the cruisers should be removed with their ammunition, and the 3-pdrs. in the 'Majestic' class, other than those that are having their turrets removed, could also be spared, having regard to their 6-inch and 6-pdr. gun armament.

Adjutant General Royal Marines will provide from the Blue Marine Artillery Battalion one gunner for each 12-pdr. and 6-pdr. gun. These gunners are to teach the members of the yacht or trawler crew or members of the armed party placed on board as quickly as possible how to handle the gun, and as soon as they can satisfy an inspecting officer that their pupils are proficient they will be withdrawn to the Royal Marine Headquarters. For giving this instruction, the marine will receive a bounty of £2, and for qualifying as a gunner the recruit or member of the crew will also receive a bounty of £2. In six weeks or two months we ought to have the bulk of these men back at Headquarters.

It is proposed also to put an armed party on board every trawler or drifter, whether armed with a gun or not, not only for

action against submarines who may come to the surface and take observations in their neighbourhood, but as a preventive against mine-laying.

Adjutant General Royal Marines will call for volunteers from the Crystal Palace for this purpose, and, if necessary, a small bounty can be paid to men volunteering. Three men and a corporal (who may be specially promoted) should be assigned to each drifter and trawler as they become available. Efforts are being made to secure sporting rifles in England and America,<sup>1</sup> and these as they come to hand will be used, first, to arm the armed parties of the newly taken up trawlers and drifters, and after this is done to replace service rifles in the possession of the crews of yachts, trawlers, and drifters already in commission. Men who suffer seriously from sea-sickness may have the option for that cause of reverting to shore service.

I await Sir Arthur Wilson's proposals for allocating fifty 18-cwt., 12-cwt., and 8-cwt. 12-pdrs. to selected decoy vessels, merchant and Admiralty vessels plying in the dangerous areas. For these also 1 marine gunner will be provided, and a small armed party placed on board, as in the case of the trawlers.

The requirements of these services are to be met in precedence over other requirements which have not yet matured, and for which these guns have been prepared—for instance, the 36 which are required for fleet sweepers, and the 24 required for monitors will not be needed for two or three months, and may do useful service meanwhile. By that time some other warships may be paid off, which may increase our available resources. The 12-cwt. 12-pdrs. from the *Mars*, *Victorious*, and *Illustrious* need not at present be appropriated for fleet sweepers. Plymouth anti-aircraft can be reduced from 6 to 2.

8. All suitable yachts in the United Kingdom or other small vessels not now appropriated will be immediately commandeered.

I wish to receive a weekly return of the whole 'yacht, trawler, and drifter fleet,' showing the additions made each week. Proposals should be put forward for the proper organization and control of the 'trawler fleet.' It may be thought convenient to call the different squadrons by the names of the commanding officer, and this may foster rivalry and *esprit de corps*.

9. I still think that the allocation of 8 destroyers to the Tyne, and 5 to the Tees, and 8 to Immingham lies under the criticism that it is too many to be spared and too few to dis-

<sup>1</sup> This gives some idea of the munitions stringency.

charge any effective service. I should prefer to see the 8 destroyers from the Tyne added to the defences of the Forth and be made available for escort duties from there, and the 13 destroyers of the Tees and Immingham should go to Portsmouth, to be available for general duty on the South and West Coasts. But I agree that any change of this kind may be gradual, and the allocation proposed by the Chief of the Staff should therefore be carried out at once.<sup>1</sup>

W. S. C.

It will be seen that we regarded the cross-Channel communications as our first and vital care. New Divisions were now passing almost every week to France, and their conduct and escort required ceaseless and intricate precautions. Elaborate instructions for dealing with or avoiding submarine attacks were also given to the captains of British merchant ships, and many other measures were taken as recorded in the *Official Naval History*.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from arming and commissioning the enormous Mosquito Fleet on which we chiefly relied, our two principal devices for destroying the German submarines were the Bircham Indicator Nets and the Decoy Ships, afterwards called the Q-boats. The Indicator Net was a light flexible curtain of thin steel wire woven into 6 or 10-foot meshes and supplied in lengths of 200 yards. These were laid clipped together, in long lines across particular channels, and their floats were watched continually by armed trawlers. We had tried them, not without some risk, on one of our own submarines with good results. The submergence of the glass buoys on which the net was hung or the automatic ignition of a calcium light betrayed immediately the presence of the submarine. The net trailing backward wrapped itself around the vessel with a good chance of entangling its propeller, while at the same time a tell-tale buoy attached to the net by a long line floated on the surface, and enabled the hunting vessels to follow their submarine enemy wherever he went. At least 1,000 miles of these nets were ordered during the first months of 1915; and by February 13 seventeen miles of the Straits of Dover were already obstructed by guarded nets. Such was the theory, but needless to say it encountered many difficulties and disappointments in practice.

The device of the Decoy Ships was also simple; the idea arose in the following manner. In the previous September a small steamer, plying between St. Malo and Southampton with fruit and vegetables, had been fired at by a German submarine. Admiral Sir Hedworth Meux, who commanded at Portsmouth,

<sup>1</sup> See also Appendix H.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, pages 271-2-3.

came to the Admiralty to see me on general business, and in conversation it was suggested that a gun might be concealed on this small ship under the fruit and vegetables. This was accordingly done. No opportunity of using it occurred, but the idea was revived under the renewed threat of extended submarine warfare. Early in February I gave directions for a number of vessels to be constructed or adapted for the purpose of trapping and ambushing German submarines. For the most part they were ordinary tramp steamers, but some were to be specially constructed of the build and type of Norwegian fishing vessels. These vessels carried concealed guns which by a pantomime trick of trap doors and shutters could suddenly come into action. Great ingenuity was shown by the Admiralty departments in developing this idea, and the use of these vessels afterwards afforded opportunity for some of the most brilliant and daring stratagems in the naval war.

In addition every form of scientific warfare against submarines was perseveringly studied. Already the microphone or hydrophone for detecting the beat of a submarine propeller in the distance had been discovered: but at this date it was only in an experimental condition. Bomb-lances, explosive sweeps, Actæon nets (or necklaces of explosives) were eagerly and simultaneously developed. A close and fruitful union between the scientist, the inventor, and the submarine officer was established, the best brains of the Navy were concentrated on the problem, and no idea, technical or tactical, was spurned by the Admiralty Staff.

\* \* \* \* \*

The German U-boat campaign, or the so-called blockade of the British Isles, began as promised on February 18; and that same day a British merchant ship was torpedoed in the Channel. By the end of the first week eleven British ships had been attacked, of which seven had been sunk. In the same period no less than 1,381 merchant vessels had arrived in, or sailed from, British ports. The second week of the attack was completely ineffective: only three ships were assailed and all escaped. The arrivals and departures aggregated 1,474. By the end of February we were sure that the basis on which we were acting was sound: British trade was proceeding as usual, and the whole of our transportation across the Channel flowed on, division by division, uninterrupted. We continued to publish the weekly figures during the whole of March. In the four weeks of that month upwards of six thousand vessels reached or left British ports, out of which only twenty-one were sunk, and these together aggregated only 65,000 tons. April confirmed the conclusions of March: only twenty-three ships were sunk out of over

six thousand arrivals and departures, and of these six were neutrals, and only eleven, aggregating 22,000 tons, were British. The failure of the German submarine campaign was therefore patent to the whole world.

Meanwhile the Germans were themselves already paying heavily for their policy. At least four U-boats out of their small numbers available had been destroyed. On March 1 one became entangled in the Indicator Nets off Start Bay near Dartmouth, and was blown up under water the next day by an explosive sweep. On the 4th the Dover nets and destroyers detected, chased and sunk U8, her entire crew being rescued and made prisoners. On the 6th a hostile submarine, which proved finally to be U12, was sighted off Aberdeen, and after a four days' hunt of incredible perseverance and skill by our small craft, was destroyed and ten survivors taken prisoner. On the 16th a still more remarkable incident occurred: Commander Weddigen, who since his exploits in sinking the three cruisers off the Dutch coast in September, 1914, had become a German national hero, sank a merchant ship off the south coast of Ireland, after taking from it a small gun as a trophy. He was returning to Germany on the 18th when, near the Pentland Firth, he fell in with the Grand Fleet at exercise. The Fourth Battle Squadron was now commanded by Admiral Sturdee flying his flag in the *Dreadnought*. The luck which had brought about the Battle of the Falkland Islands had clearly not deserted Admiral Sturdee, for in ten minutes the *Dreadnought*, handled with great skill by its captain and navigating officer and aided by the *Temeraire*, rammed the submarine. Her bows reared out of the water revealing her number, U29, as she sank for ever to the bottom of the sea with every soul on board. So perished the destroyer of the *Cressy*, the *Aboukir* and the *Hogue*.

Most of the other U-boats returning to Germany had rough and grim experiences to report. One had been caught in the nets off Dover and only escaped after fearful adventures; another had been rammed by a well-handled merchant ship, the *Thordis*, and with difficulty managed to crawl home in a damaged condition; a third narrowly escaped at the end of a three hours' chase by the destroyer *Ghurka*. There were many other incidents of a similar character.

It was in the Straits of Dover that we had concentrated our greatest efforts. It was here that we achieved our most complete success. Early in April, U32 was entangled in the Dover nets, and preferred to return all round the North of Scotland rather than renew her experiences. The account which she gave to the German naval staff of the defences and barriers in the Straits of Dover was such that all U-boats were absolutely forbidden to

attempt to pass the Straits; all must make a *détour* 'north about' round Scotland on their way to our western approaches. This prohibition continued in force for more than a year. The eastern waters of the Channel thus became completely clear, and no sinkings within the Dover cordon occurred after the middle of April. We did not, however, know how well our measures and the exertions of Admiral Hood, who carried them out and constantly elaborated them, had succeeded. Injustice was done to this officer when, upon Lord Fisher's advice, I transferred him, about the middle of that month, to another command and appointed in his stead Admiral Bacon, whose mechanical aptitudes and scientific attainments seemed specially to be required on this critical station. It was not until the middle of May that I became aware, from constant study of our gathering information, how excellent had been Admiral Hood's work. Only a few more days were left me at the Admiralty. There was time, however, to repair the injustice, and almost my last official act was to appoint him to the command of the 3rd Battle-Cruiser Squadron. This great prize he accepted with the utmost delight. Alas, it led him to a glorious doom in the Battle of Jutland!

Surveying the situation in April, it was evident that not only had the Germans failed in the slightest degree to impede the movements of British trade, troops and supplies, but that they had themselves suffered heavy and disproportionate losses in the vital units on which their whole policy depended. By May their premature and feeble campaign had been completely broken, and for nearly eighteen months, in spite of tragic incidents, we suffered no appreciable inconvenience. All the measures which we had taken, and all the organizations which had been set on foot, to deal with this unprecedented form of attack, were, however, developed and perfected with the utmost energy. Our merchant skippers were made increasingly familiar with all the methods by which submarine attack should be encountered or avoided. The vigilance and ingenuity of our multiplying Mosquito Fleet was stimulated by a generous system of rewards. The Indicator Nets were improved, and produced in great quantities. Tireless scientific research pursued the secret of detecting the presence of a submerged submarine through the agency of the hydrophone. Lastly, the Decoy Ships were increased in numbers, and their ambuscades and stratagems raised to a fine art. To the providential warning of this impotent campaign and the exertions made in consequence of it, we were to owe our safety in the terrible days which were destined eventually to come upon us.

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Results scarcely less to our advantage were experienced in our

relations with the United States, on which the whole efficiency of our blockade of the Central Empires depended. On March 3 I had written to the Cabinet as follows:—

'The international laws relating to blockade were framed without reference to the new conditions introduced into warfare by the presence of the submarine. However great the superiority of the stronger fleet, it is not practicable to draw blockading lines in close proximity to the enemy's coasts and harbours, as was always previously possible, because the submarines of the weaker fleet would sink the blockading vessels although that fleet was unable or unwilling to put to sea. It therefore becomes necessary to draw the lines of blockade at a greater distance from the enemy's coasts and ports than heretofore, and this involves in certain cases the inclusion within the scope of the blockading lines, not only of enemy but of neutral ports. This prevents the use of the term "blockade" according to its strict technical interpretation. But it does not in the least prevent an effective blockade in the natural and practical, as opposed to the legal and technical, sense. The British naval blockade of German North Sea ports is at present maintained by the cruiser cordon at the mouth of the English Channel and the flotillas at the Straits of Dover, and by the cruiser cordon and cruiser squadrons from the North of Scotland to Iceland. These blockading lines are in every sense effective: no instance is known to the British Admiralty of any vessel, the stopping of which had been authorized by the Foreign Office, passing them unchallenged. It is not a case of a paper blockade, but of a blockade as real and as efficient as any that has ever been established, having regard to the new and unforeseen conditions of naval war. The means of carrying on an effective blockade of the enemy's ports ought not to be denied to the stronger naval power. . . . All the time we are ourselves subjected, so far as lies in the strength of the enemy, to indiscriminate attacks by mines lying in the open sea as well as to the deliberate sinking of merchantmen without challenge, by submarine agency. It is for neutral nations to recognize that it is not practically possible, nor in neutral interests, to claim the maintenance of a situation which would deprive naval strength of all its rights while permitting naval weakness to indulge in every abuse.'

This is not the place to discuss the grave and intricate questions of international law which had arisen since the beginning of the war between Great Britain and the United States and other neutral nations. The arguments on both sides were technical and interminable, and whole libraries can be filled with them. Underlying all the legal disputes and manœuvres, was that great fund of

kinship and goodwill towards us, of sympathy for the cause of the Allies, of affection for France and of indignation against Germany, which always swayed, and in the end triumphantly dominated, American action. But in spite of this we might well at this time have been forced to give up the whole efficiency of our blockade to avoid a rupture with the United States.

There is nowadays a strong tendency to underestimate the real danger of an adverse decision in America at this period. The National tradition of the United States was not favourable to us. The Treaty with Prussia in 1793 in defence of 'the freedom of the seas' constituted the first international relationship of the American Republic. The war of 1812, not forgotten in America, had arisen out of these very questions of neutrality. The established rules of international law did not cover the conditions which prevailed in the great struggle. The whole conception of conditional contraband was affected by the fact that the distinction between armies and nations had largely passed away. The old laws of blockade were, as has been shown, inapplicable in the presence of the submarine. It was not always possible to harmonize our action with the strict letter of the law. From this arose a series of delicate and deeply perplexing discussions in which rigid legalists across the Atlantic occupied a very strong position. There were in addition serious political dangers: Irish and German influences were powerful and active; a strong party in the Senate was definitely anti-British; the State Department was jealously and vigilantly watched, lest it should show partiality to Great Britain. The slightest mistake in dealing with the American situation might at this juncture have created a crisis of the first magnitude. It was the memorable achievement of Sir Edward Grey, seconded by our Ambassador at Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, that this peril was averted. British and American gratitude also illumines the memory of the United States Ambassador in London, Mr. Page, whose wisdom and generous nobility guarded the English-speaking world and its destiny from measureless injury.

It was in these issues that the first German U-boat campaign gave us our greatest assistance. The German announcement threatening neutral as well as British merchant ships had altered the whole position of our controversies with America. A great relief became immediately apparent. The torpedoing at the end of February of the Norwegian steamer *Belridge*, bound from America with oil for the Dutch Government, was another event which turned the current of American irritation from the British blockade to the German outrages. All the forces friendly to the Allies throughout the Union were animated and strengthened, and German influences proportionately cast down. The stringency of



our measures against Germany could be increased without deranging the precarious equipoise of our relations with the great Republic. Sir Edward Grey, aided and guided by Mr. Page, was enabled by processes of patience, tact and conciliation to sustain our position without quarrelling through the whole of March and April: and in May an event occurred which was decisive.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE INCREASING TENSION

Suspense—Lord Fisher's Attitude—Sir John Jellicoe's Health—Question of his Successor—The Battle Cruiser Fleet—Correspondence with Lord Fisher—Lord Fisher and the Sea Lords—His Position Defined—Difficulties and Friction—Further Correspondence with Lord Fisher—The Munition Crisis—Lord Kitchener and his Colleagues—Grave Embarrassments—Admiralty and War Office Compared—Growing Political Discontent.

**A**PRIL was a month of painful and harassing suspense. Sir Ian Hamilton's Army was repacking at Alexandria; Admiral de Robeck's attention was absorbed in preparation for the landing. The Turks were concentrating, organizing and fortifying. Italy and the Balkans trembled in the balance. Our relations with the United States were most delicate. The position on and behind the Russian front caused profound anxiety. A complete breakdown in the methods of munition supply by the War Office plainly impended. The political situation grew tense.

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After March 18 the attitude of the First Sea Lord had become one of quasi-detachment. He was greatly relieved that the burden had now been assumed by the Army. He approved every operational telegram which I or the Chief of the Staff drafted for him. In the end he assented to whatever steps were considered necessary for the proper support of the Army. But while he welcomed every sign of the despatch of troops, he grudged every form of additional naval aid. He endeavoured repeatedly to turn my mind from the Dardanelles back to the Northern theatre, where, however, there could not be any serious naval operation on our initiative for many months. He evinced increasing concern about the situation in the North Sea.

Although I did not share Lord Fisher's anxiety, real or assumed, about the North Sea, I thought this month of April was a critical one. The Germans must know that we had a very considerable fleet, including some of our best modern ships, withdrawn from the main and for the Navy decisive theatre. We hoped that they would believe that the forces at the Dardanelles were even larger than they were. We had sent several of the dummy battleships to

the Mediterranean, hoping thereby to tempt the enemy to battle in the North Sea.

The War Staff orders for the attack on the Dardanelles approved by Lord Fisher contained the following passage: 'A number of merchant vessels have been altered to represent "Dreadnought" battleships and cruisers, and are indistinguishable from them at 3 or 4 miles distance . . . They should be used with due precaution to prevent their character being discovered, and should be shown as part of the Fleet off the entrance to the Dardanelles, as if held in reserve. *They may mislead the Germans as to the margin of British strength in Home Waters.*'<sup>1</sup>

We now know that they completely deceived the Turks, who identified and reported one to Germany as the *Tiger*. When I saw the First Sea Lord cordially agree in such a policy of courting battle, I could not take very seriously his general attitude of apprehension. He knew perfectly well that we were strong enough to fight, and no one would have been better pleased had the battle begun.

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After the action of the Dogger Bank Sir John Jellicoe became seriously indisposed and had to undergo a minor, though trying, surgical operation on shore. I could not help feeling that the somewhat gloomy views he had taken in January had a physical cause besides the continuous strain of labour and responsibility which he had borne since the outbreak of war. Although we did not see eye to eye on various questions, and adopted a somewhat different standard of values, I retained the greatest admiration for his gifts and qualities both as an organizer and as a seaman. I therefore advised His Majesty to mark his eminent services by conferring upon him the Grand Cross of the Bath.

During his illness I wished to make Admiral Beatty Acting Commander-in-Chief, giving him for this purpose a seniority superior to that of Admiral Burney, who was the next senior officer to Sir John Jellicoe, but whose health at this time was also somewhat affected by the rigours of service. I hoped that if Admiral Beatty held the command of the Grand Fleet for several weeks, the naval objections to his want of seniority—he was still only a Rear-Admiral—would pass away and he would be accepted thenceforward as the recognized Second-in-Command and as the obvious successor to Sir John Jellicoe should ill-health prevent that officer from resuming his duties, or should any other cause make his transference to the Admiralty or to some other sphere desirable. I obtained Lord Fisher's concurrence in this most important decision. I was forced however to abandon my inten-

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

tion for the time being, because Admiral Beatty and his battle-cruisers could not be moved from the Forth, and it proved impossible to surmount the technical difficulties of his exercising the supreme command of the main Fleet while it remained at Scapa. I therefore contented myself as an interim measure with giving him a seniority as Acting Vice-Admiral, which made him senior to any other officer who could conceivably be involved in any operation which might arise in the North Sea while the Grand Fleet continued so far from the scene of action.

I also devised and carried through the formation of the Battle Cruiser Fleet. This organization was to consist of three squadrons, each of three battle-cruisers, each attended by a light cruiser squadron of four of our latest and fastest vessels, together with the *M* flotilla of our swiftest destroyers. The central conception of this force was Speed. It presented a combination of Speed and Power far superior to any naval force at the disposal of the Germans. In the first instance, most of the light cruisers belonged to the Town class and could not steam more than 27 knots; but the *Arethusas* were now coming rapidly into commission, and would effectually improve the speed of the squadrons. In order to form this Fleet I telegraphed to the Commonwealth Government, asking them to place the *Australia* at our disposal. This they did with the utmost goodwill and characteristic loyalty to the general interest.

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My relations with the First Sea Lord continued pleasant, intimate and always frank. They cannot be better followed in this period of increasing tension than in our correspondence. His comments on a report from Sofia showed that we both viewed the Bulgarian question from the same angle.

*Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.*

*February, 26, 1915.*

As I have always (*before the Balkan War and when Admiral in the Mediterranean*) been an 'out and out' Bulgarian, this paper has my deepest sympathy and fullest concurrence with the Bulgarian Minister of War. We have done nothing else this whole war but lose opportunities! As I told you last night, the one most awful thing in war is 'the careful man'! He's the man with the *one talent*! Shove him into outer darkness where there is grinding and gnashing of teeth!

First Lord.

*March 3, 1915.*

I concur in your proposal to remit this question [the projected attack upon Borkum] for careful study by Sir A. K. Wilson,

with whom I have on many occasions discussed it in general terms. (*The whole problem depends on the efficiency of our arrangements for protection against submarines—an effective means of protection is not yet in sight.*)

This operation would necessarily await the trend of events in the Dardanelles. We must know what forces remain before embarking on a new undertaking.

We are now committed to the Dardanelles at all costs so must anyhow wait till middle of May, by which time events in Holland may quite change the position and indicate Terschelling as our base.<sup>1</sup>

March 4, 1915.

*The more I consider the Dardanelles the less I like it! No matter what happens it is impossible to send out anything more, not even a dinghy! and why the hostile submarine has not appeared is a wonder.*

March 12, 1915.

W. R. Hall<sup>2</sup> came to me last night with this idea:—The German best battleships rush the Dover Straits (dropping mines behind them) and get [to] the Dardanelles and gobble up our ships *and then refuge at Constantinople!* Colliers *en route* arranged at Cartagena if necessary, and Jellicoe *PERFORCE more than 24 hours behind all the way!* Afterwards they (the Germans) gobble up the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea and bombard as convenient Odessa! Varna! Constantinople!!! etc., etc. . . .

MORAL.—*Carden to press on!* and Kitchener to occupy the deserted forts at extremity of Gallipoli and mount howitzers there. . . .

March 16, 1915.

The decisive theatre remains and ever will be the North Sea. Our attention is being distracted. Schleswig-Holstein and the Baltic are not living with us now. . . .

March 19.

Let not our eyes be too much off the main theatre.

I hope Bax-Ironside<sup>3</sup> has prevented ammunition and submarines passing through to Constantinople.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the event of Holland joining the Allies.

<sup>2</sup> Rear-Admiral Hall, the Director of the Intelligence Division.

<sup>3</sup> Our Minister at Bucharest, Roumania.

<sup>4</sup> Via Sofia.

March 20, 1915.

*Dardanelles.*

16 English Destroyers.

6 Torpedo Boats.

6 French Destroyers.

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28

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I count up 28 destroyers and torpedo boats at Dardanelles, and in view of the very narrow entrance of the Dardanelles and restricted area of operations this is infinitely a bigger proportion than we have at home ; but all the same we ought to press the French to send more destroyers and more light cruisers. It's ridiculous what little the French do! And what good [is] their keeping a force on the Syrian Coast? I have only one anxiety; the German and Austrian submarines—*when they appear the game will be up!* That's why I wish to press on the military co-operation and get a base at Cape Helles anyhow. It will be three weeks before the military can do anything according to present arrangements.

April 2, 1915.

Let us hope that the Dardanelles will be passed and over by the desired date to your honour and glory, and that the Bulgarians . . . will be . . . the first in . . . so getting Salonika and Kavalla and Macedonia generally as their reward! I EARNESTLY HOPE THIS MAY RESULT! Had the Greeks come in all would have been well without doubt. (Did you see that a Bulgarian General strongly urged an alternative disembarking place for our troops? *Does Kitchener know?*)

*We cannot send another rope yarn even to de Robeck.* WE HAVE GONE TO THE VERY LIMIT!!! And so they must not hustle and should be distinctly and most emphatically told that no further reinforcements of the Fleet can be looked for! *A failure or check in the Dardanelles would be nothing. A failure in the North Sea would be ruin.* But I do not wish to be pessimistic, and let us hope that Gallipoli ain't going to be Plevna, or that de Robeck will be 'Duckworthed.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the year 1807 Admiral Duckworth, profiting by a favourable wind, accomplished the passage of the Dardanelles without difficulty, and the British Fleet entered the Sea of Marmora. He passed ten days in negotiations with the Turks, but never attempted to come within 20 miles of Constantinople. Meanwhile the Turks increased the fortifications of the Straits. Failing to get any satisfaction out of the enemy by threats and parleys, Admiral Duckworth thought it prudent to take advantage of a northerly wind and repassed the Straits successfully on

April 5, 1915.

From Maguire's report the *Inflexible* is far worse than *Lion*, so will be quite three months *hors de combat*! The war may be over by then if Holland comes in! I do not think you are sufficiently impressed by Cambon's warning as to Holland! *We ought to have every detail organized to move in a moment to Texel.* You are just simply eaten up with the Dardanelles and cannot think of anything else! Damn the Dardanelles! They will be our grave! . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

On April 7 the Second, Third and Fourth Sea Lords asked Lord Fisher by minute to reassure them on certain points connected with the conduct of the war. Was he satisfied that we were not putting in jeopardy the principle that the Grand Fleet should be always in such a position and of such strength that it could be at all times ready to meet the entire Fleet of the enemy with confident assurance as to the result? The attack on the Dardanelles, they said, was probably from the point of view of high policy quite correct, but could we afford the loss in ships and the expenditure on ammunition? They observed that we had already 'lost, or more or less demobilized, ten battleships (including *Inflexible*).<sup>1</sup> It was true they were mostly old ones and that, on the other hand, we had added and should shortly add seven. The Germans, however, had lost none and had added six.<sup>1</sup> Was the First Sea Lord satisfied with the rate of progress of battleship completion? Was the prospect of obtaining supplies of ammunition sufficiently good to ensure there being enough available for the use of the Grand Fleet in view of the expenditure involved by the operations in the Dardanelles? In conclusion the Sea Lords asked Lord Fisher to assure them that the whole policy had his concurrence, and that he was satisfied with it.

March 1. He was heavily fired at on his return but lost no ships and only 150 men.

This episode is frequently cited as an example of the futility of forcing the Straits. The facts show clearly that it had no relation whatever to modern conditions either in regard to the difficulties of the passage up or down or to the consequences attendant upon success.

<sup>1</sup> This is a good example of a certain class of arithmetic and of magnifying the enemy's strength. The maximum possible number of German Dreadnoughts in Home Waters in August, 1914, was 21. We had always credited the enemy with this figure, though we could hardly believe it. This meant that we assumed the 4 *Königs* and *Derfflinger* were all ready in August, 1914. On this basis only one other ship—*Lützow*—could have been added to the German strength by April, 1915, and not 6 as the Sea Lords argued. On all our original calculations we had added a net 6 to the German 1.

In fact, however, the Germans did not have 21 Dreadnoughts ready in Home Waters in August, 1914, but only 16. They had added 5 since then—not to 21—but to 16. And their total numbers were 21 to 34.

Lord Fisher replied formally by minute the same day. He stated that he was entirely in agreement with the fundamental principle of the maintenance of the strength of the Grand Fleet.

'The Dardanelles operation' (he continued) 'is undoubtedly one, the political result of which, if successful, will be worth some sacrifice in *matériel* and personnel; it will certainly shorten the period of the war by bringing in fresh Allies in the Eastern theatre, and will break the back of the German-Turkish alliance, besides opening up the Black Sea.

'It was with hesitation that I consented to this undertaking, in view of the necessarily limited force of ships which could be devoted to it, of the shortage of shell and cordite, and of the factor of uncertainty which must always obtain when ships attack land fortifications and mined areas under their protection.

'But, as you state, these high points of policy must be decided by the Cabinet; and in this case the real advantages to be gained caused me eventually to consent to their view, subject to the strict limitation of the Naval Forces to be employed so that our position in the decisive theatre—the North Sea—should not be jeopardized in any one arm.

'I am of opinion at the present time that our supremacy is secure in Home Waters and that the forces detached are not such as to prejudice a decisive result should the High Seas Fleet come out to battle. But at the same time I consider that we have reached the absolute limit, and that we must stand or fall by the issue, for we can send out no more help of any kind. I have expressed this view very clearly to the First Lord, and should there at a later period be any disposition on the part of the Cabinet to overrule me on this point, I shall request my Naval colleagues to give their support in upholding my view. . . .

'I am satisfied with the position at present and in the near future, but shall, of course, be more satisfied when we get the battleships back from the Dardanelles.

'The supply of cordite is very far from satisfactory. We cannot, however, stop the Dardanelles operations on this account and must accept the temporary reduction of the reserve of two outfits which it entails, exercising the greatest economy in expenditure of 15-inch and other critical calibres. But all extraneous sources of expenditure must be cut off at once.'

The position of the First Sea Lord is thus very clearly defined.

<sup>1</sup> In May, 1915, the Cordite position was as follows:—We had begun the war with 23,000 tons; we had fired away 1,500 tons; we had received 8,000 tons; and 13,000 tons were due by the end of the year. All the necessary measures to increase the supply still further had been taken by me in January and February and were now far advanced. See Appendix H.  
w.c.—u (2)



He is seen to be formally and deliberately identified with the enterprise. When notice was given of a Parliamentary question<sup>1</sup> asking whether the First Sea Lord had agreed to the attack of March 18, he wrote across the draft answer: 'If Lord Fisher had not approved of this operation, he would not now be First Sea Lord.' There is therefore no dispute upon the main issue. But it was not possible, having gone so far, to say, 'I will not send another rope yarn.' Great responsibilities had been incurred: a most serious operation impended; the Army was about to land. It was imperative that it should be properly supported. Subject to the paramount requirement of our safety in the North Sea, everything that was needed and could reasonably be spared, had to be given. Admiral de Robeck now telegraphed for a number of officers to assist in the landing. Lord Fisher was reluctant to accede to this request, and wished also to impose restrictions upon the employment not only of the *Queen Elizabeth*, but also of the *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson*, which would to a very large extent have deprived the Army of their support. I could not honourably agree to this, and my view was accepted. But every officer, every man, every ship, every round of ammunition required for the Dardanelles, became a cause of friction and had to be fought for by me, not only with the First Sea Lord but to a certain extent with his naval colleagues. The labour of this was enormous, but although in the end I allowed no request which reached me from the Fleet to pass unheeded, the process was exhausting. I have no doubt that many requests perished before they reached me, or were not proffered because it was known they would not be welcome. All the time there were ample supplies of ammunition and many powerful naval reinforcements available which could have been sent without affecting our security in the North Sea. This is proved by the fact that they were subsequently sent on a far greater scale than was now in question, without evil consequences or undue risk and by a different Board of Admiralty.

I did my best to allay the anxieties of the Sea Lords about ammunition without paralysing the operations.

April 18, 1915.

Secretary.

. . . . . I agree that only the supreme need of the Army could justify any slackening in naval production or diversion of supplies—even in 12 and 14 pr. ammunition; and that no decision to this effect should be taken without a formal Board decision.

The Bombarding Ships as a rule do not fire the Grand Fleet ammunition. Where one ship or one or two monitors are con-

<sup>1</sup> Not eventually put.

cerned I cannot agree that in one specific class of ammunition a rigid rule should be maintained and should be held to spoil operations by which the fate of the war is vitally affected. But on the general principle of the reserve for Grand Fleet ships not being reduced below what it was at the outbreak of war, I am, subject to the exceptions above mentioned, fully agreed.

If my naval colleagues would like to discuss this matter at a Board meeting, they should tell the Secretary and I will have it put on the agenda for Thursday.

W. S. C.

*Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.*

*April 11, 1915.*

A telegram has been sent (enclosed) about *Queen Elizabeth*. Personally I think it superfluous, but since you wish it I concur.

I do not consider that at this critical moment it would be right to harass the Admiral by imposing any restrictions on his use of *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson*.

There is no reason for withdrawing your confidence from him because of the *Inflexible*.<sup>1</sup> He had already ordered *Canopus* to go the whole way with her, when you very prudently telegraphed. Anyhow, I am told by the experts that either *Talbot* or *Canopus* could equally carry away any available hawsers.

It appears to me indispensable to send the Admiral Captain Phillimore and the officers he requires for the vital and critical operation of landing the troops. See his last telegram. I am sure you will agree that this authorization should go first thing to-morrow. It ought to have gone to-night; but I do not wish to act without you even in the smallest matter.

Seriously, my friend, are you not a little unfair in trying to spite this operation by side winds and small points when you have accepted it in principle? It is hard on me that you should keep on like this—every day something fresh: and it is not worthy of you or the great business we have in hand together.

You know how deeply anxious I am to work with you. Had the Dardanelles been excluded, our co-operation would have been impossible. It is not right now to make small difficulties or add to the burden which in these times we have to bear.

Excuse frankness—but friends have this right, and to colleagues it is a duty.

*Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.*

*April 12, 1915.*

I did not get your upbraiding letter till after I had written to you about *Inflexible* being repaired at Gibraltar, which still seems desirable.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the sending and convoy of the *Inflexible* to Gibraltar for repairs.

Never in all my whole life have I ever before so sacrificed my convictions as I have done to please you!—THAT'S A FACT! Whoever told you that the *Talbot* was as good as a battleship to tow *Inflexible*<sup>1</sup> must have been hypnotized by you—nor is it correct that de Robeck had given orders before the Admiralty telegram. Off my own bat I suggested the immediate despatch of *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* (hoping they would shield *Elizabeth* and *Inflexible*!). De Robeck will hoist his flag in the *Lord Nelson* you may be sure, instead of the *Vengeance*, his former flagship. For the work in hand the *Vengeance* quite as good for close action. Nevertheless I say no more. The outside world is quite certain that I have pushed you, and not you me! So far as I know the Prime Minister is the solitary person who knows to the contrary. I have not said one word to a soul on the subject except to Crease<sup>2</sup> and Wilson and Oliver and Bartolomé, and you may be sure these four never open their mouths!

Indirectly I've worked up Kitchener from the very beginning via Fitzgerald.

I think it's going to be a success, but I want to lose the oldest ships and to be chary of our invaluable officers and men for use in the decisive theatre.

April 20, 1915.

I am quite sick about our submarines and mines and not shooting at Zeppelins (who never can go higher than 2,000 yards and light cruisers bound to bring them down). Really yesterday had it not been for the Dardanelles forcing me to stick to you through thick and thin I would have gone out of the Admiralty never to return, and sent you a postcard to get Sturdee up at once in my place. You would then be quite happy!!!

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the beginning of the year the disquietude of several of the principal members of the War Council about the supply of munitions for the Army had been continually increasing. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour, who with Lord Kitchener and me were members of a Cabinet Committee set up in January to investigate the position, were insistent that the measures of the War Office were in no way proportioned to our needs. Many hundreds of thousands of men had joined the colours and were now in training. The expansion of the British Army to 70 or even to 100 divisions had been designed, yet rifles had not been ordered

<sup>1</sup> I had not said this; but only that the *Talbot* would equally have carried away the available hawsers.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Crease, Naval Assistant to the First Sea Lord.

to supply more than two-thirds of the men actually recruited. The orders placed for artillery were utterly inadequate. The new and special requirements of the war seemed still further neglected. No effective organization for the production of machine guns on the scale on which they were needed had been even planned. The supplies of shell of all kinds, particularly high explosive, and the provision of medium and heavy artillery were on a pitifully small scale. The manufacture of trench-mortars, bombs, and hand grenades was hardly begun.

When complaint was made to Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War and his advisers replied that every factory and source of supply was working to its utmost power, and that the orders already given were far in excess of the capacity to produce, and that the deliveries even of the reduced amounts were enormously in arrear. This was true, but not exhaustive. It was urged that measures out of all proportion to anything previously conceived must be taken to broaden the sources of supply. The War Office replied that they had already done everything that was possible at the moment, and that the fruits of their exertions would not be apparent for many months. They adduced a great number of examples of their action and showed the orders they were placing abroad, principally in America and Japan. All this was still regarded as quite insufficient, and the argument on both sides became fierce.

The critics contended that the Ordnance and Contract branches of the War Office knew nothing whatever about the production of munitions on the gigantic scale required, and that they were far too small and weak a body to deal with these immense and complicated problems of manufacture and industry. They pointed out that the War Office specifications drawn in the leisurely and thrifty days of peace were so arbitrary and narrow that they aggravated the difficulties of mass production, and were at the moment in some cases arresting the whole supply of certain weapons. For instance, the specifications for the wheels of the field guns were so particular that only one firm was able to produce them; the wood chosen for the rifle stocks was of a kind most limited and difficult to obtain; the fuses of the shells were needlessly complex, etc. To this the War Office rejoined that they could not put inferior weapons in the hands of the troops, that soldiers alone could be the judges of the quality, character and quantity of the weapons and equipment of the Army. They declared they could not take the responsibility of allowing these vital matters to pass out of the domain of the professional soldiers into the hands of civilians, politicians or business men, however well meaning and enthusiastic. Thus on both sides the fires were banked up, and temperature and pressure rose together.

The stress increased with every week that passed. The demands of the Army grew incessantly. Each new division that took the field began to consume munitions of every kind on growing scales. Great numbers of troops at home were seen utterly unequipped. From the front flowed a torrent of complaints. Simultaneously the outputs fell hopelessly below the promises of the contractors. Lord Kitchener dreaded to send fresh divisions to the front even when they were equipped, for fear of revealing still further the inadequacy of the main plant by which they could be nourished. He made every conceivable personal exertion, but nothing in his training as a soldier or as an administrator had fitted him to organize this mighty and novel sphere. His assistants were few and rigid, and he himself took a strict view of the importance of military control.

From the indignation which was freely expressed to me by my colleagues during this month of April, I could not doubt that an explosion of a very violent kind was approaching. The Admiralty was in an easier position. We had maintained in peace incomparably the largest Navy in the world, and our sources of supply were upon the same scale. The British Army, on the other hand, was based on Arsennals narrowly measured by our tiny peace establishments. The Navy had expanded from a broad basis to perhaps double its size ; the Army from its restricted basis had been called upon to expand to the equivalent of ten or fifteenfold. At the outbreak of the war we had placed very large orders for everything that the Navy needed with the great firms and dockyards which stood behind the Fleet. I had kept alive the Coventry Works by special measures in 1913, thus giving us a new additional source of heavy gun production. Even before Lord Fisher came to the Admiralty in November, 1914, we had set on foot, in accordance with maturely considered pre-war plans, a great volume of production. The old Admiral's impulse and inspiration supervened on this with cumulative effect. We were thus able, readily and easily, to cope with the developments which the course of the war and the progress of invention required. Already in January and February we were at full blast, and on the whole well ahead with our work in every department. Our task had not been comparable in difficulty with that of the War Office. In fact our very efficiency by absorbing much of the existing capacity for armament production aggravated their troubles. Still, the fact remained that the War Office were not solving their problems, and that there was no prospect of their doing so upon the existing lines.

Growing wrath and fear were not confined to the War Council. Lord Kitchener's embarrassments compelled him to restrict in the most drastic terms the demands of the Armies in the field in

respect of all the supplies they needed most. He saw himself forced to give rulings upon the proportion of machine guns, high explosive shell and heavy artillery which seemed absurd and almost wicked to those who did not know his difficulties. Tension grew between the staff at General Headquarters and the War Office. The Army at the front carried its complaints through innumerable channels to Parliament and the Press; and though patriotism and the censorship prevented public expression, the tide of anxiety and anger rose day by day.

Well would it have been if in the solemn moment when we first drew the sword, a National Government resting on all parties had been formed. In those August days when our peaceful and, but for the Navy, almost unarmed people stood forth against the Aggressor, all hearts beat together. There was a unity and comradeship never after equalled. All were ardent for the Cause, and there had been no time to make mistakes in method. Then was the moment to have proclaimed National Government and National Service together. This was certainly my wish. But the moment was lost. The Conservative Party, its power magnified in the atmosphere of war, was left free from all responsibility to watch the inevitable mistakes, shortcomings, surprises and disappointments which the struggle had in store. Its leaders had held themselves hitherto under a public-spirited restraint, silent but passionate spectators. They could endure the strain no longer. Thus both from within and from without, at the War Office and in the Admiralty, in France and at the Dardanelles, tension grew into crisis, and crisis rose to climax.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BATTLE OF THE BEACHES<sup>1</sup>

April 25, 1915

Description of the Gallipoli Peninsula—Three Main Alternatives—Problems of Attack and Defence—The Twenty-fifth of April—At the Turkish Headquarters—Liman von Sanders's Principal Apprehension—'V' Beach—'W' Beach—'X' Beach—The Anzac Landing—Mustapha Kemal—A Bitter Struggle—April 26 at Helles—Exhaustion of both Sides—Absence of British Reserves—The Turkish Counter-Attack Repulsed—The Need for Reinforcements—Battle of May 7-9—The Advance Arrested—Trench Warfare Supervenes.

THE Gallipoli Peninsula stretches into the *Ægean* Sea for 52 miles and is at its broadest 12 miles across.<sup>2</sup> But *its ankle*, the Isthmus which joins it to the Mainland, is only 3½ miles wide near the village of Bulair; and at *its neck* opposite Maidos at the south-western end the width is scarcely 6 miles. This very considerable area is mountainous, rugged and broken by ravines. Four main hill features dominate the ground: the semi-circular chain of hills surrounding Suvla Bay rising to 600 or 700 feet; the Sari Bair Mountain just over a 1,000 feet high; the Kilid Bahr Plateau opposite the Narrows between 600 and 700 feet high; and about 6 miles from the south-western tip the peak of Achi Baba, also 700 feet high.

Outside the Straits the landing-places are comparatively few. The cliffs fall precipitously to the sea and are pierced only by occasional narrow gullies. The surface of the Peninsula is covered for the most part with scrub, interspersed with patches of cultivation. A considerable supply of water in springs and wells exists throughout the region, particularly in the neighbourhood of Suvla Bay. One other feature of practical significance requires to be noted. The tip of the Peninsula from Achi Baba to Cape Helles has the appearance from the sea of being a gradual slope, but in fact this all-important tip is spoon-shaped and thus to a very large extent protected by its rim from direct naval fire.

The operations which were now to take place presented to both sides the most incalculable and uncertain problems of War. To

<sup>1</sup> See Map of the Turkish Theatre facing page 753.

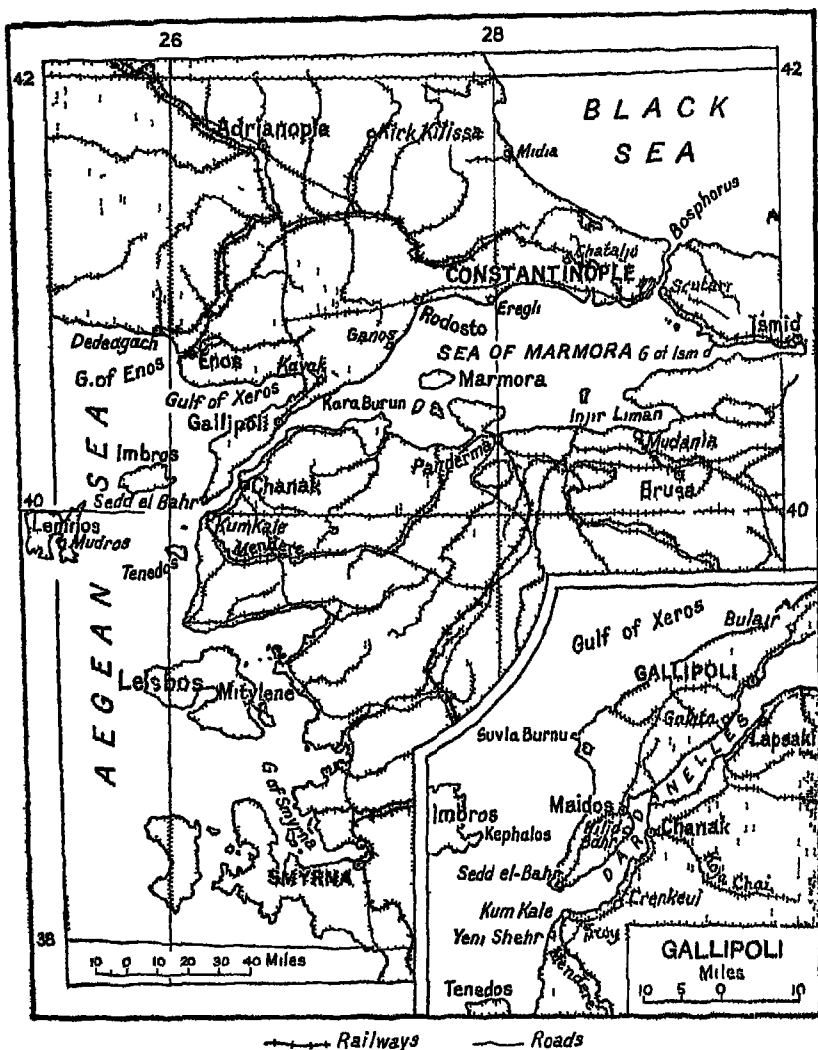
<sup>2</sup> See Map and Plan of Helles and Anzac pages 760-1. The General Map of the Turkish Theatre will also be useful.

land a large army in the face of a long-warned and carefully prepared defence by brave troops and modern weapons was to attempt what had never yet been dared and what might well prove impossible. On the other hand, the mysterious mobility of amphibious power imposed equal perils and embarrassments upon the defenders. General Liman von Sanders knew, as we have seen, that an army estimated at between 80,000 and 90,000 men was being concentrated at Mudros, in Egypt or close at hand. Where and when would they strike? There were obviously three main alternatives, any one of which might lead to fatal consequences—the Asiatic shore, the Bulair Isthmus and the Southern end of the Peninsula. Of these the Asiatic shore gave the best prospects for the landing and manœuvring of a large army. The Bulair Isthmus, if taken, cut the communications of all the troops on the Peninsula both by land and sea, and thus in von Sanders's words, 'afforded the prospect of a strategic decision.' Thirdly, to quote von Sanders, 'The strip of coast on each side of Gaba Tepe was the landing-place best suited to obtaining a quick decision, as a broad depression interrupted by only one gentle rise led straight from it to Maidos.'<sup>1</sup> There were also at the Southern end of the Peninsula the landing-places in the neighbourhood of Cape Helles giving access to the peak of Achi Baba whence the forts on the Narrows were directly commanded. The enemy had no means of knowing which of these widely separated and potentially decisive objectives would receive the impending attack. To meet this uncertain, unknown, unknowable and yet vital situation the German Commander was forced to divide the 5th Turkish Army into three equal parts, each containing about 20,000 men and 50 guns. Whichever part was first attacked must hold out for two or three days against superior numbers until help could come. To minimize this perilous interval the communications between the three parts had been, as we have seen, improved as far as possible. Roads had been made and boats and shipping accumulated at suitable points in the Straits. Nevertheless the fact remained that Liman von Sanders must resign himself to meet in the first instance the whole of the Allied Army with one-third of his own already equal forces, and nearly three days must elapse after battle was thus joined before any substantial Turkish reinforcements could arrive.

In fact, however, the British Commander had fewer alternatives open to him than those which Liman von Sanders was bound to take into account. Sir Ian Hamilton was under injunctions from Lord Kitchener not to involve his army in an extensive campaign in Asia, for which he had neither the numbers nor the land transport. The resources of the Navy in small craft were

<sup>1</sup> Liman von Sanders: *Five Years in Turkey*, page 80





## THE TURKISH THEATRE

judged not to be sufficient at this time to maintain a large army landed at Enos, sixty or seventy miles from its base at Mudros, to assault Bulair. Thus there remained in practice only the Southern end of the Peninsula open to the Allied attack. But as von Sanders could not know this, he must still continue to provide against all three contingencies. The issue, therefore, on the eve of battle narrowed itself down to a three days' struggle between the whole Anglo-French forces available, or whatever more these Governments had chosen to make available, and the 20,000 Turks who with their 50 guns were occupying the Southern end of the Gallipoli Peninsula. To get ashore and crush or wear down these 20,000 men, and to seize the decisive positions they guarded near the Narrows, was the task of Sir Ian Hamilton; and for this purpose he had in his hand about 60,000 men and whatever support might be derived from the enormous gun power of the Fleet. It was a grimly balanced trial of strength for life and death.

The first incalculable hazard was the landing under fire. This might well fail altogether. It was not inconceivable that most of the troops might be shot in the boats before they even reached the shore. No one could tell. But if the landing were successful, the next peril fell upon the Turks: they had for at least three days to try to hold out against superior forces. How superior no Turk could tell. It had rested entirely with Lord Kitchener how many men he would employ. If, however, the British and French forces were too few and the Turkish defence was maintained for three days, then the balance of advantage would turn against the Allies. After the third or fourth day the attackers would have expended their priceless treasure of surprise. Their choice would be disclosed and they would be committed almost irrevocably to it. Large reinforcements would reach the Turks; strong entrenchments would be completed; and ultimately the invaders would have to meet the main forces of Turkey which could gradually be brought against them from all parts of the Ottoman Empire. Rapidity and Intensity of execution at the outset were therefore the essential of any sound plan.

\* \* \* \* \*

At daybreak on April 25 Sir Ian Hamilton began his descent upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. The story of the Battle of the Beaches has been often told and will be often told again. From the sombre background of the Great War with its inexhaustible sacrifices and universal carnage this conflict stands forth in vivid outline. The unique character of the operations, the extraordinary amphibious spectacle, the degree of swiftly fatal hazard to which both armies were simultaneously exposed, the supreme

issues at stake, the intensely fierce resolve of the soldiers—Christian and Moslem alike—to gain a victory the consequences of which were comprehended in every rank—all constitute an episode which history will long discern. It would not be fitting here to recount the feats of arms which signalized the day. To do them justice a whole volume would be required: each Beach deserves a chapter; each battalion, a page. Only the principal features and their consequences can here be traced.

Sir Ian Hamilton's plan comprised two main converging attacks on the Southern end of the Peninsula: the first by the 29th Division at five separate simultaneous landings in the vicinity of Cape Helles, the second by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps near Gaba Tepe opposite Maidos. Both these attacks would have become related in the event of either making substantial progress, and both drew upon the resources of the two Turkish divisions which alone were available at this end of the Peninsula. In addition the French were to make a landing on the Asiatic shore near the ruins of Troy to effect a temporary diversion, and the Royal Naval Division in transports accompanied by warships pretended to be about to land at Bulair.

\* \* \* \* \*

Liman von Sanders has described in rugged sentences the scene at the Turkish Headquarters in the town of Gallipoli when in the early morning the news of the invasion arrived.

‘From 5 a.m. onwards on April 25 reports of great landings of enemy troops already begun or about to begin followed rapidly one on another. In the south, beginning on the Asiatic side, the 11th Division reported great concentration of enemy warships and transports in and off the Great and Little Besika Bays, and a landing threatening. Somewhat further north, at Kum Kale, the outposts of the 3rd Division were already in lively combat with the French troops which had landed there covered by the fire of numerous French warships. At the southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula . . . strong British forces fought the outposts of the 9th Division for possession of the landing places. The whole stretch of coast here and its hinterland lay under the fierce fire of large calibre British naval guns. At Gaba Tepe and on the side of the previously mentioned Maidos Gap, troops were being disembarked from British warships, whilst enemy warships lying in a half circle searched the ground in rear with the fire of the largest calibres. Near us, in the upper Gulf of Xeros, numerous warships and transports were approaching the coasts. From there also the roar of continuous gun fire was soon plainly to be heard. It

was evident from the white faces of the reporting officers at this early hour that, although a hostile landing had been fully expected, its occurrence at so many places at once had surprised most of them and filled them with apprehension.'

'My first feeling,' he adds with some complacency (for he was completely deceived as to which were the true and which the feint attacks), 'was that there was nothing to alter in our dispositions. The enemy had selected for landing those places which we ourselves had considered would be the most probable and had defended with especial care.' He proceeded forthwith to where he considered the greatest danger lay. 'Personally I had to remain for the present at Bulair, since it was of the utmost importance that the Peninsula should be kept open at that place.' Thither he also ordered immediately the 7th Division encamped near the town of Gallipoli. All day long, in spite of the news that reached him of the desperate struggle proceeding at the other end of the Peninsula, he held this Division and the 5th intact close to the Bulair lines. It was only in the evening that he convinced himself that the ships and transports gathered in the Bay of Xeros were intended as a feint, and even then he dared only to despatch by water five battalions from this vital spot to the aid of his hard-pressed forces beyond Maidos. Not until the morning of the 26th, twenty-four hours after the landings had begun, could he bring himself to order the remainder of the 5th and 7th Divisions to begin their voyage from Bulair to Maidos, where they could not arrive before the 27th. Thus in his own words, 'the upper part of the Gulf of Xeros was almost completely denuded of Turkish troops,' and finally only 'a depot Pioneer Company and some Labour battalions' occupied empty tents along the ridge. 'The removal of all the troops from the coast of the upper part of the Gulf of Xeros,' he writes, 'was a serious and responsible decision on my part in the circumstances, but it had to be risked in view of the great superiority of the enemy in the Southern part of the Peninsula. Had the British noted this weakness they might well have made great use of it.'

Nothing more clearly reveals the vital character of the Turkish communications across the Isthmus of Bulair than the solicitude for them manifested at this juncture by this highly competent soldier. It is well to ponder in the light of this fact upon Lord Kitchener's observation, 'Once the Fleet has passed the Straits the position on the Gallipoli Peninsula ceases to be of importance.'

\* \* \* \* \*

We must return to the Battle of the Beaches.<sup>1</sup> Of the five

<sup>1</sup> See Map of Helles on pages 760-2.

landings in the neighbourhood of Cape Helles that of the 88th Brigade on 'V' Beach close to the ruined fort of Sedd-el-Bahr was intended to be the most important. Over two thousand men of the Dublin and Munster Fusiliers and of the Hampshire regiment packed in the hold of the *River Clyde*, a steamer specially prepared for landing troops, were carried to within a few yards of the shore. It had been planned to bridge the intervening water space by two lighters or barges. Along this causeway the troops were to rush company by company on to the Beach. At the same time the rest of the Dublin Fusiliers approached the shore in boats. There were scarcely more than four or five hundred Turks to oppose this assault, but these were skilfully concealed in the cliffs and ruined buildings reinforced by a good many machine guns and protected by mines and wire both in the water and ashore. As the Irish troops rushed from the hold of the *River Clyde*, or as the boats reached the submerged barbed wire, an annihilating fire burst upon them from all parts of the small amphitheatre. The boats were checked by the wire or by the destruction of their rowers. The lighters, swayed by the current, were with difficulty placed and kept in position. In a few minutes more than half of those who had exposed themselves were shot down. The boats, the lighters, the gangways, the water, and the edge of the beach were heaped or crowded with dead and dying. Nevertheless the survivors struggled forward through the wire and through the sea, some few reaching the beach, while successive platoons of Dublin and Munster Fusiliers continued to leap from the hold of the *River Clyde* into the shambles without the slightest hesitation until restrained by superior authority. Commander Unwin and the small naval staff responsible for fixing the lighters, and indeed for the plan of using the *River Clyde*, persevered in their endeavours to secure their lighters and lay down gangways unremittingly in the deadly storm, while others struggled with unsurpassed heroism to save the drowning and dying or to make their way armed to the shore. The scenes were enacted once again which Napier has immortalized in the breaches of Badajoz. Nothing availed. The whole landing encountered a bloody arrest. The survivors lay prone under the lip of the Beach, and but for the fire of the machine guns of Commander Wedgwood's armoured car squadron which had been mounted in the bows of the *River Clyde*, would probably have been exterminated. The Brigadier, General Napier, being killed, the whole attempt to land at this point was suspended until dark.

Fighting scarcely less terrible had taken place at 'W' Beach. Here the Lancashire Fusiliers, after a heavy bombardment from the Fleet, were towed and rowed to the shore in thirty or forty

cutters. Again the Turks reserved their fire till the moment when the leading boats touched the Beach. Again its effects were devastating. Undeterred by the most severe losses from rifle and machine-gun fire, from sea mines and land mines, this magnificent battalion waded through the water, struggled through the wire, and with marvellous discipline actually reformed their attenuated line along the Beach. From this position they were quite unable to advance, and this attack also would have been arrested, but for a fortunate accident. The boats containing the company on the left had veered away towards some rocks beneath the promontory of Cape Tekke. Here the soldiers landed with little loss, and climbing the cliffs fell upon the Turkish machine guns which were sweeping the Beach and bayoneted their gunners. Profiting by this relief, the remainder of the battalion already on the Beach managed to make their way to the shelter of the cliffs, and climbing them established themselves firmly on their summit. Here at about nine o'clock they were reinforced by the Worcesters, and gradually from this direction the foothold won was steadily extended during the day.

Still further to the left the Royal Fusiliers had landed at 'X' Beach, admirably supported at the closest ranges by the *Implacable* (Captain H. C. Lockyer). They were followed by the Inniskillings and the Border Regiment, and by fierce fighting and a resolute charge carried the high ground above Cape Tekke, thus establishing connection with the troops from 'W' Beach.

A mile to the left of 'X' Beach again, two battalions of Marines were landed without a single casualty at 'Y'. These were attacked at nightfall, and early the next morning signalled for boats and re-embarked. They, however, drew to their neighbourhood important Turkish forces, and thus for a time aided the other attacks. At the other end of the line, at 'S' Beach, on the extreme right near the old fort called De Totts Battery, another battalion was easily landed and maintained an isolated position. When darkness fell, the remaining troops in the *River Clyde* managed to get ashore without further loss, and gradually secured possession of the edge of 'V' Beach and some broken ground on either side of it. Thus when the day ended lodgments had been effected from all the five Beaches attacked, and about 9,000 men had been put on shore. Of these at least 3,000 were killed or wounded, and the remainder were clinging precariously to their dear-bought footholds and around the rim of the Peninsula. We must now turn to the second main attack.

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It had been intended to land the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps near Gaba Tepe<sup>1</sup> with the purpose of striking across

<sup>1</sup> See Map of Anzac and Suvla Bay on page 861.

the neck of the Peninsula towards Maidos. In contrast to the landings of the 29th Division at Helles, this all-important descent was to take place before dawn and without artillery preparation. It was hoped that while the Turkish forces were involved at the end of the Peninsula with the 29th Division, the Anzacs would make great headway in its most vulnerable part. The arrangements provided for successive landings from boats and launches, aided by destroyers, of 1,500 men at a time. A rugged and difficult spot half a mile north of Gaba Tepe, unlikely to be elaborately defended, was chosen for the landing. In the dark the long tows of boats missed their direction and actually reached the coast a mile further to the north, entering a small bay steeply overhung by cliffs till then called Ari Burnu, but in future Anzac Cove. This accident led the attack to a point quite unexpected by the defenders. The actual landing was made with little loss, and the foot of the cliffs proved in practice well sheltered from artillery fire. On the other hand it carried the Australian advance away from the broad depression from Gaba Tepe to Maidos into the tangled and confused underfeatures and deep ravines radiating in all directions from the mountain of Sari Bair. It also still further separated the Anzac attack from that of the 29th Division at Cape Helles.

As the flotilla approached the shore a scattered fire from the Turkish pickets rang out; but the Australians leaping from the boats into the water or on to the beach scrambled up the cliffs and rocks, driving the Turks before them in the dim but growing light of dawn. The destroyers were close at hand with another 2,500 men, and in scarcely half an hour upwards of 4,000 men had been landed. The skirmish developing constantly into an action rolled inland towards the sunrise, and by daylight considerable progress had been made. By half-past seven, 8,000 men in all had been landed. In spite of rifle and artillery fire which steadily increased against the Beach, by 2 o'clock the whole infantry of the leading Australian Division, 12,000 strong, and two batteries of Indian mounted artillery, were ashore occupying a semi-circular position of considerable extent. The 2nd Division including a New Zealand brigade followed, and within a period of twenty-four hours in all 20,000 men and a small proportion of artillery were effectively landed.

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The two Turkish divisions who were left without help of any sort to face the onslaught of the Allied Army were shrewdly disposed. Nine battalions of the 9th Division guarded the likely landing-places around the coast from Gaba Tepe to Morto Bay; the remaining three battalions of that Division and the nine

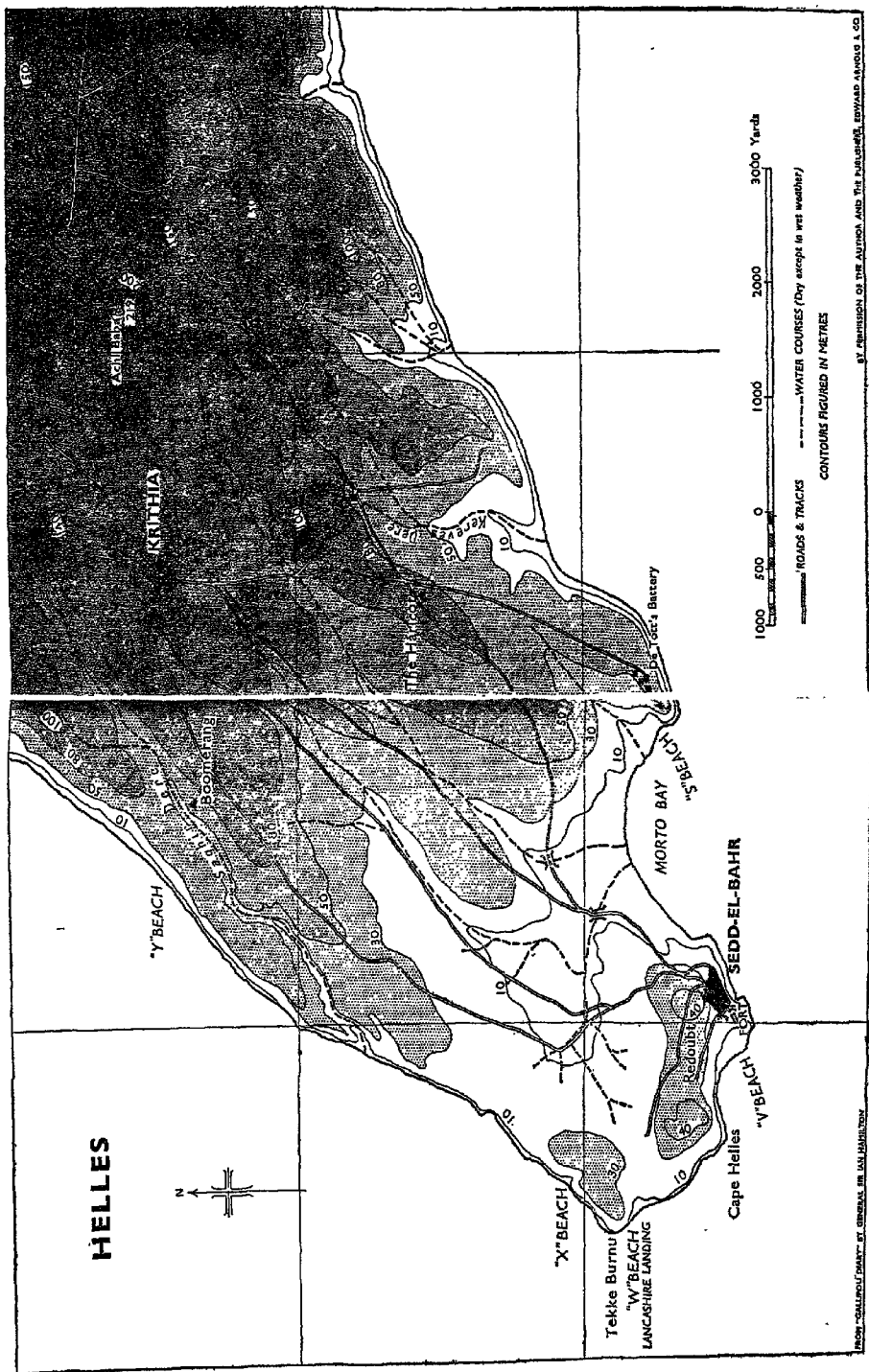
battalions forming the 19th Division were all held concentrated in reserve near Maidos. At the head of the 19th Division there stood in this strange story a Man of Destiny. Mustapha Kemal Bey had on April 24 ordered his best regiment, the 57th, a field exercise for the next morning in the direction of the high mountain of Sari Bair (Hill 971) and, as Fate would have it, these three battalions stood drawn up on parade when at 5.30 a.m. the news of the first landings came in. A later message reported that about one British battalion had landed near Ari Burnu and were marching upon Sari Bair. Both Sami Pasha, who commanded at the Southern end of the Peninsula, and Sanders himself regarded the landing at Ari Burnu as a feint, and Mustapha Kemal was ordered merely to detach a single battalion to deal with it. But this General instantly divined the power and peril of the attack. On his own authority he at once ordered the whole 57th Regiment, accompanied by a Battery of Artillery, to march to meet it. He himself on foot, map in hand, set off across country at the head of the leading company. The distance was not great, and in an hour he met the Turkish covering forces falling back before the impetuous Australian advance. He at once ordered his leading battalion to deploy and attack, and himself personally planted his mountain Battery in position. Forthwith—again without seeking higher authority—he ordered his 77th Regiment to the scene. By ten o'clock when the Turkish Commander-in-Chief galloped on to the field, practically the whole of the Reserves in the Southern part of the Peninsula had been drawn into the battle, and ten battalions and all the available artillery were in violent action against the Australians.<sup>1</sup>

Bitter and confused was the struggle which followed. The long-limbed athletic Anzacs thrust inland in all directions with fierce ardour as they had sprung pell-mell ashore from the boats, intent on seizing every inch of ground that they could. They now came in contact with extremely well-handled and bravely led troops and momentarily increasing artillery fire. In the deep gulleys, among the rocks and scrub, many small bloody fights were fought to the end. Quarter was neither asked nor given; parties of Australians cut off were killed to the last man; no prisoners wounded or unwounded were taken by the Turks.

Meanwhile on both sides reinforcements were being hurried into the swaying and irregular firing line. All through the day and all through the night the battle continued with increasing fury. In the actual fighting lines on both sides more than half the men engaged were killed or wounded. So critical did the position appear at midnight on the 25th, and so great was the confusion behind the firing line, that General Birdwood

<sup>1</sup> This episode is well described in the Australian Official history





and the Australian Brigadiers advised immediate re-embarkation, observing that decision must be taken then or never. But at this juncture the Commander-in-Chief showed himself a truer judge of the spirit of the Australian troops than even their own most trusted leaders. Steady counsel being also given by Admiral Thursby, Sir Ian Hamilton wrote a definite order to 'Dig in and stick it out.' From that moment through all the months that followed the power did not exist in the Turkish Empire to shake from its soil the grip of the Antipodes.

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All through the night of April 26 the position at 'V' Beach continued critical. The landing-place was still exposed to Turkish rifle fire, and a further advance was imperative if any results were to be achieved. Accordingly at dawn on the 26th, preceded by a heavy bombardment from the Fleet, the remnants of the Dublin and Munster Fusiliers and of the Hampshire Regiment were ordered to assault the castle and village of Sedd-el-Bahr. Undaunted by their losses and experiences, unexhausted by twenty-four hours of continuous fighting, these heroic troops responded to the call. By nine o'clock they had stormed the castle, and after three hours' house to house fighting made themselves masters of the village. A Turkish redoubt strongly held by the enemy lay beyond. The wasted battalions paused before this new exertion, and the redoubt was subjected to a violent and prolonged bombardment by the battleship *Albion*. When the cannonade ceased the English and Irish soldiers mingled together, animated by a common resolve, issued forth from the shattered houses of Sedd-el-Bahr, and in broad daylight by main force and with cruel sacrifice stormed the redoubt and slew its stubborn defenders. The prolonged, renewed, and seemingly inexhaustible efforts of the survivors of these three battalions, their persistency, their will power, their physical endurance, achieved a feat of arms certainly in these respects not often, if ever surpassed in the history of either island race. The re-organization of the troops at the water's edge, the preparation and inspiration of these successive assaults, are linked with the memory of a brave staff officer, Colonel Doughty-Wylie, who was killed like Wolfe in the moment of victory and whose name was given by the Army to the captured fort by which he lies.

As the result of these successes and of the continued pressure of the British attack from its various lodgments on the enemy, a continuous arc was established by the evening of the 26th along the whole coast from 'V,' 'W' and 'X' Beaches, and a junction was effected with the single battalion landed at 'S.' Profiting by the exhaustion, heavy losses and inferior numbers of the

Turks, and reinforced by four French battalions, the Allies on the 27th converted this concave arc by a further advance into a line from a point about two miles north of Cape Tekke to De Totts Battery. The extreme tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula had thus been bitten off, all the Beaches were protected from rifle fire, and a substantial foothold had been established and consolidated upon land.

The rest of the 29th Division, the Royal Naval Division, and the French Division having landed during the 26th and 27th, Sir Ian Hamilton ordered on the 28th a general advance from the tip of the Peninsula towards Krithia Village. Although the Turks were beginning to receive reinforcements and had reorganized, they considered this a very critical day. The troops which had opposed the landing had lost heavily. Their battalions were reduced to about 500 strong. By midday the whole of the Turkish reserves were engaged. The British and French, however, were not strong enough to make headway against the Turkish rifle fire. Once inland in the spoon-shaped dip the ships' guns could not help them much, and they had not had time to develop their own artillery support. By the evening of the 28th, therefore, a complete equipoise was reached. If, during the 28th and 29th, two or three fresh divisions of French, British, or Indian troops could have been thrown in, the Turkish defence must have been broken and the decisive positions would have fallen into our hands. And all the time the lines of Bulair lay vacant, naked, unguarded—the spoil of any fresh force which could now be landed from the sea. Where was the extra Army Corps that was needed? It existed. It was destined for the struggle. It was doomed to suffer fearful losses in that struggle. But now when its presence would have given certain victory, it stood idle in Egypt or England.

The next move lay with the Turks. Reinforcements were steadily and rapidly approaching the hard-pressed two Divisions. The leading regiments of the Divisions from Bulair were already arriving at intervals. The 15th Division was coming by sea from Constantinople to Kilia Liman. The 11th Division was crossing from the Asiatic shore. In this situation the 29th and 30th passed away without event.

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On the morning of the 27th we received at the Admiralty a telegram from Admiral de Robeck giving an account of the battle.

I took this across at once myself to Lord Kitchener. As soon as he saw that 29,000 men had been landed, he expressed the most lively satisfaction. He seemed to think that the critical

moment had passed, and that once the troops had got ashore in large numbers the rest would follow swiftly. But the news of the heavy losses that came in on the 28th, and the further telegrams which were received, showed the great severity and critical nature of the fighting. On this day, therefore, Lord Fisher and I repaired together to the War Office and jointly appealed to Lord Kitchener to send Sir Ian Hamilton large reinforcements from the troops in Egypt and to place other troops in England under orders to sail. Fisher pleaded eloquently and fiercely and I did my best. Lord Kitchener was at first incredulous that more troops could be needed, but our evident anxiety and alarm shook him. That evening he telegraphed to Sir John Maxwell and to Sir Ian Hamilton assigning an Indian Brigade and the 42nd Territorial Division then in Egypt to the Dardanelles.

There was no reason whatever why these forces and others should not have been made available as a reserve to Sir Ian Hamilton before his attack was launched, in which case the preparations for bringing them to the Peninsula would have been perfected simultaneously with those of the attack and the transports could have carried them to the Peninsula the moment the beaches were ready for their reception. These reinforcements aggregating 12,000 or 13,000 rifles could have fought in the battle of the 28th or enabled it to be renewed at dawn on the 29th. In fact, however, the Indian Infantry Brigade did not land until May 1, and the leading brigade of the 42nd Division did not disembark until May 5.

Meanwhile reinforcements from all quarters and artillery taken from the defences of the Straits were steadily reaching the Turks. By May 1 the local German Commander, Sodenstern, thought himself strong enough to begin a general counter-attack, and during the whole of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, he continued to thrust in his troops, wearied as they were either by march or battle, in a series of desperate and disconnected attempts to drive the Allies into the sea. But if Sir Ian Hamilton's army was not strong enough to advance itself, neither could it be shaken from its positions. By May 3 the Turkish attacks had broken down completely with very heavy loss. The first wave of Turkish reinforcements had spent itself, and it was again the turn of the Allies. The organization of the beaches had been established; supplies, artillery, and ammunition had been landed in considerable quantities. There was nothing to prevent a renewed general advance on the 4th or 5th against the discouraged Turks, had additional troops proportionate to the new situation been available. As it was the attack could not be begun until the 6th and so short of troops was Sir Ian Hamilton that he found it

necessary to withdraw the 2nd Australian Brigade and the New Zealand Brigade from the Anzac area to Helles.

The new battle commenced on the morning of the 6th and was continued on the 7th and 8th. It was sustained by nearly 50,000 British and French troops with 72 guns, against which the Turks mustered approximately 30,000 men with 56 guns. The result was a great and bitter disappointment for the Allies. Only a few hundred yards were gained along the whole front. The losses both of the British and French had been very heavy. In all from the 25th to the cessation of the attack on the evening of the 8th, the British had lost nearly 15,000 killed and wounded and the French at least 4,000.

The situation disclosed on the morrow of this battle was grim. Sir Ian Hamilton's whole army was cramped and pinned down at two separate points on the Gallipoli Peninsula. His two main attacks, though joined by the sea, were now otherwise quite disconnected with each other. None of the decisive positions on the Peninsula were in our hands. A continuous line of Turkish entrenchments stood between the British and Achi Baba, and between the Australians and the mountain of Sari Bair or the town of Maidos. These entrenchments were growing and developing line upon line. The French having been withdrawn from Troy, the Turkish troops in Asia were free to reinforce the Peninsula. All the available British reserves, including the Indian Brigade and the 42nd Division, had been thrown in and largely consumed after their opportunity had passed. The casualties in every battalion had been serious, and there was no means at hand of filling the gaps. Not even the regular 10 per cent. reserve which follows automatically every division sent on active service had been provided for the 29th Division. On the 9th Sir Ian Hamilton reported that it was impossible to break through the Turkish lines with the forces at his disposal, that conditions of trench warfare had supervened, and that reinforcements of at least an Army Corps were needed. At least a month must intervene before the drafts needed to restore the Divisions already engaged and the large new forces plainly required could be obtained from home. What would happen in this month of continued wastage in the Allied Army and of unceasing growth in the Turkish power? Initiative and Opportunity had passed to the enemy. A long, costly struggle lay before us and far greater efforts would now certainly be required.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AFTER THE LANDING

Effects of the Landing at Home and Abroad—Italy about to enter the War—The Anglo-French-Italian Naval Convention—Resumption of the Allied Offensive in France—Battle of Aubers Ridge—A Casualty Clearing Station—The Sinking of the *Lusitania*—Consequences—On Board the *Queen Elizabeth*—Admiral de Robeck's Resolve—His Telegram of May 10—New Factors in the Decision—Apparition of the German Submarines—I wish to renew the Attack on the Minefields—Lord Fisher's Agitation—His Memorandum of May 11—Correspondence with him—Disjointed Resolves—Withdrawal of the *Queen Elizabeth*—Lord Kitchener's Anger—His Dispute with Lord Fisher—An Arrangement Effected—Telegrams to Admiral de Robeck.

IN spite of the fact that the Army was brought to a standstill, the great event of the landing continued to produce its impression throughout Europe. Italy, Greece, Roumania, Bulgaria assumed that now that large allied forces were definitely ashore, they could and would be reinforced from the sea until the Turkish resistance was overcome. The Italian momentum towards war proceeded unchecked: and the Balkan states continued in an attitude of strained expectancy. At home the growing political crisis underwent a distinct set-back. The leaders of the Opposition had been advised by high authorities in France that the operation of landing would fail and that the troops would be repulsed at the beaches with disastrous slaughter. They were of course greatly relieved when these predictions were falsified, and there was for the moment a corresponding easement of tension.

On May 5, while the battle on the Peninsula was still undecided, I had to go to Paris for a purpose of great importance. The negotiations with Italy which had been proceeding during March and April had in its last fortnight assumed a decisive character. On April 26 the Treaty of London, by which Italy agreed to come into the war, had been signed. On May 4 Italy denounced the Triple Alliance, and thereby made public her change of policy. Sir Edward Grey had on medical advice taken a brief spell of rest at the beginning of April, and the Prime Minister for ten days grasped the Italian business in his own hands with downright vigour. On the Foreign Secretary's return the advantage gained had been zealously pursued. The

terms of the secret treaty which resulted in the entry of Italy into the war have long since been made public. They reveal with painful clearness the desperate need of the three Allies at this juncture. Locked in the deadly struggle, with the danger of the Russian collapse staring them in the face, and with their own very existence at stake, neither Britain nor France was inclined to be particular about the price they would pay or promise to pay for the accession to the alliance of a new first-class power. The Italian negotiators, deeply conscious of our anxiety, were determined to make the most advantageous bargain they could for their country.

The territorial gains which Italy was to receive on her frontiers, in the Adriatic, and from the Turkish Empire were tremendous. These political prizes were to be supplemented by Military and Naval conventions of the utmost importance. The British Fleet was actively to co-operate with the Italians in the Adriatic, and the Russians were to continue a vigorous offensive with at least 500,000 men against Austria in Galicia. Thus guaranteed both by sea and land, Italy seemed safe to advance and appropriate the enormous prizes for which she had stipulated. The hopes and calculations which inspired these arrangements were soon to be falsified. Those who launch out upon the stormy voyage of war can never tell beforehand what its length or fortunes will be, or in what port they will at last drop anchor. Within a fortnight of the signature of the Military Convention, Mackensen had fallen upon the Russians along the Dunajecs, the battle of Gorlice-Tarnau had been fought, and the Russian Armies were everywhere in retreat and recoil. The apparition of Yugo-Slavia as a strong new power at the end of the war rendered the conditions which Italy had exacted in the Adriatic obviously inapplicable. And lastly Turkey, beaten in the war, has risen resuscitated and virtually intact from the disasters of the peace. It was not to an easy war of limited liability and great material gains that Italian statesmen were to send their countrymen. Italy, like the other great combatants, was to be drenched with blood and tears. Year after year, her soil invaded, her manhood shorn away, her treasure spent, her life and honour in jeopardy, must she struggle on to a victory which was to bring no complete satisfaction to her ambitions. But though the calculations of statesmen had failed, the generous heart of the Italian nation proved not unequal to the long trials and disappointments of the struggle, nor unworthy to sustain amid its mocking fortunes the ancient fame of Rome.

As it seemed vital that no hitch nor delay should obstruct the signing of the Naval Convention, I proceeded to Paris armed on behalf of the Admiralty with plenary powers. The Italian

apprehension was that if as the result of victory Russia established herself at Constantinople, and if Serbia also gained a great increase of territory, these combined Slavonic powers would develop a strong naval base on or off the Dalmatian coast. The prospect which had arisen from the Dardanelles operations, of Russia possessing Constantinople, forced Italy to make the greatest exertions to secure her own position in the Adriatic, which would have been irretrievably compromised by an allied victory in which Italy had taken no part. We therefore spent two days in intricate discussions between the French and the Italians about the naval bases which Italy was to secure on the Dalmatian coast in the treaties following a victorious war. Among these their most important claim was for what was called the Canal of Sabioncello. This strip of good anchorage for the largest vessels between two long islands, out of gunfire from the shore, and half-way down the Adriatic, presented indeed every ideal condition for an Italian Naval Base. But there were many other claims, and whenever the discussion seemed to prove discouraging to the Italians we threw the British trident into the scale, offering to agree to the request not only for cruisers and flotillas but for a squadron of battleships as well. Since it seemed that Admiral de Robeck had definitely abandoned the attempt to force the Dardanelles, his fleet had clearly ships to spare. In the end a complete agreement was reached between the naval authorities of the three countries. The Italians insisted on having British battleships, and the French without taking offence at this, agreed to replace a British Squadron taken from the Dardanelles by an equal number of their own vessels.

I left Paris early on the morning of the 7th, intending to pass a day at Sir John French's Headquarters on my way back to England. Arrived at St. Omer on the evening of the 7th, I learnt two things. Sir Ian Hamilton's telegrams showed that he was in full battle and that no decision was yet manifest on the Peninsula. Secondly, Sir John French intended to begin a general attack directed against the Aubers Ridge in conjunction with the French Army operating on his right against the Souchez position, and this momentous event was fixed for daybreak on the 9th. I therefore stayed to see one battle, glad to keep my mind off the other.

As the reader is aware, I was at this time convinced that the task set to the British and French troops was impossible. The Germans in their front were almost equal in strength, intensely fortified, and fully prepared. The preliminary wire cutting by shrapnel bombardment had shown them exactly the gaps through which the assaulting troops were to be launched, and one could not doubt that every preparation had been made to



mow them down. Moreover the British supplies of shell were extremely limited, and the high explosive needed to shatter the German trenches was practically non-existent. I made every effort in my power without incurring unjustifiable risks to view the battle. But neither far off from a lofty steeple nor close up on the fringe of the enemy's barrage was it possible to see anything except shells and smoke. Without actually taking part in the assault it was impossible to measure the real conditions. To see them you had to feel them, and feeling them might well feel nothing more. To stand outside was to see nothing, to plunge in was to be dominated by personal experiences of an absorbing kind. This was one of the cruellest features of the war. Many of the generals in the higher commands did not know the conditions with which their troops were ordered to contend, nor were they in a position to devise the remedies which could have helped them.

On the evening of this day I witnessed also the hideous spectacle of a large casualty clearing station in the height of a battle. More than 1,000 men suffering from every form of horrible injury, seared, torn, pierced, choking, dying, were being sorted according to their miseries into the different parts of the Convent at Merville. At the entrance the arrival and departure of the motor ambulances, each with its four or five shattered and tortured beings, was incessant; from the back door corpses were being carried out at brief intervals to a burying party constantly at work. One room was filled to overflowing with cases not worth sending any farther, cases whose hopelessness excluded them from priority in operations. Other rooms were filled with 'walking wounded' all in much pain, but most in good spirits. For these a cup of tea, a cigarette, and another long motor journey were reserved. An unbroken file of urgent and critical cases were pressed towards the operating room, the door of which was wide open and revealed as I passed the terrible spectacle of a man being trepanned. Everywhere was blood and bloody rags. Outside in the quadrangle the drumming thunder of the cannonade proclaimed that the process of death and mutilation was still at its height.

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In these days also came in the news of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. This gigantic liner had for some months definitely returned to passenger service, and had made several round trips across the Atlantic in that capacity. In the first week of May she was returning to Liverpool from New York, having on board nearly 2,000 persons all non-combatants, British and American. Included in her cargo was a small consignment of rifle ammu-

niton and shrapnel shells weighing about 173 tons. Warnings that the vessel would be sunk, afterwards traced to the German Government, were circulated in New York before she sailed. On May 4 and 5 while she was approaching the British Isles, German U-boats were reported about the southern entrance to the Irish Channel and two merchant ships were sunk. Further reports of submarine activity in this area came in on the 6th. In consequence repeated and specific warnings and information were transmitted from the Admiralty wireless station at Valentia.

May 6, 12.5 a.m. To all British ships.  
... Avoid headlands. Pass harbours at full speed. Steer mid-channel course. Submarines off Fastnet.

May 6, 7.50 p.m. To *Lusitania*.  
Submarines active off south coast of Ireland.

May 7, 11.25 a.m. To all British ships.  
Submarines active in southern part of Irish Channel. Last heard of south of Coningbeg Lighthouse. Make certain *Lusitania* gets this.

May 7, 12.40 p.m. To *Lusitania*.  
Submarines five miles south of Cape Clear proceeding west when sighted at 10 a.m.

All these messages were duly received.

The Admiralty confidential Memorandum of April 16, 1915, contained the following passage:

'War experience has shown that fast steamers can considerably reduce the chance of successful surprise submarine attack by zigzagging, that is to say, altering the course at short and irregular intervals, say in ten minutes to half an hour. This course is almost invariably adopted by warships when cruising in an area known to be infested with submarines. The underwater speed of a submarine is very low, and it is exceedingly difficult for her to get into position to deliver an attack unless she can preserve and predict the course of the ship attacked.'

In spite of these warnings and instructions, for which the Admiralty Trade Division deserve credit, the *Lusitania* was proceeding along the usual trade route without zigzagging at little more than three-quarter speed when, at 2.10 p.m. on May 7, she was torpedoed eight miles off the Old Head of Kinsale by

Commander Schweiger in the German submarine U.20. Two torpedoes were fired, the first striking her amidships with a tremendous explosion, and the second a few minutes later striking her aft. In twenty minutes she foundered by the head, carrying with her 1,195 persons, of whom 291 were women and 94 infants or small children. This crowning outrage of the U-boat war resounded through the world. The United States, whose citizens had perished in large numbers, was convulsed with indignation, and in all parts of the great Republic the signal for armed intervention was awaited by the strongest elements of the American people. It was not given, and the war continued in its destructive equipoise. But henceforward the friends of the Allies in the United States were armed with a weapon against which German influence was powerless, and before which after a lamentable interval cold-hearted policy was destined to succumb.

Even in the first moments of realizing the tragedy and its horror, I understood the significance of the event. As the history of the Great War is pondered over, its stern lessons stand forth from the tumult and confusion of the times. On two supreme occasions the German Imperial Government, quenching compunction, outfacing conscience, deliberately, with calculation, with sinister resolve, severed the underlying bonds which sustained the civilization of the world and united even in their quarrels the human family. The invasion of Belgium and the unlimited U-boat war were both resorted to on expert dictation as the only means of victory. They proved the direct cause of ruin. They drew into the struggle against Germany mighty and intangible powers by which her strength was remorselessly borne down. Nothing could have deprived Germany of victory in the first year of war except the invasion of Belgium; nothing could have denied it to her in its last year except her unlimited submarine campaign. Not to the number of her enemies, nor to their resources or wisdom; not to the mistakes of her Admirals and Generals in open battle; not to the weakness of her allies; not assuredly to any fault in the valour or loyalty of her population or her armies; but only to these two grand crimes and blunders of history, were her undoing and our salvation due.

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Meanwhile in the Flagship at the Dardanelles the most vehement discussion had been taking place.

Since March 18, two distinct currents of opinion had flowed in high naval circles. The forward school had been more than ever convinced that the quelling of the forts, the sweeping of

the minefield, and ultimately the forcing of the Straits were practicable operations. They had no doubt whatever that the Fleet could make its way through into the Marmora. They had continually impressed upon the Admiral the duty of the Navy to attempt this task. Grieved beyond measure at the cruel losses that the Army had sustained, out of all proportion to anything expected, they felt it almost unendurable that the Navy should sit helpless and inactive after the orders they had received and the undertakings made on their behalf. They therefore pressed their Chief to propose to the Admiralty the renewal of the naval attack.

All these pressures and the spectacle of the Army's torment produced their effect upon a man of the courage and quality of Admiral de Robeck. He finally resolved to send a telegram to the Admiralty expressing his willingness to renew the naval attack. The telegram bears the imprint of several hands and of opposite opinions. But apparently, as we now know, all present at these conferences in the *Queen Elizabeth* believed that the telegram would be followed by immediate orders for battle from the Admiralty. Admiral Guépratte, the French Commander, telegraphed to the Minister of Marine showing that he fully expected to be launched in decisive attack and asking for an additional and stronger ship to reinforce the French squadron. All the naval staff and commanders rested, therefore, under the impression of a great and sublime decision in pursuance of which they would readily face every risk and endure every loss.

*Vice-Admiral de Robeck to Admiralty.*

May 10, 1915

The position in the Gallipoli Peninsula.

General Hamilton informs me that the Army is checked. its advance on Achi Baba can only be carried out by a few yards at a time, and a condition of affairs approximate to that in Northern France is threatened. The situation therefore arises, as indicated in my telegram 292:—

'If the Army is checked in its advance on Kilid Bahr, the question whether the Navy should not force the Narrows, leaving the forts intact, will depend entirely whether the Fleet could assist the Army in their advance to the Narrows best from below Chanak with communications intact or from above cut off from its base.'

The help which the Navy has been able to give the Army in its advance has not been as great as was anticipated, though effective in keeping down the fire of the enemy's batteries; when it is a question of trenches and machine guns the Navy

is of small assistance ; it is these latter that have checked the Army.

From the vigour of the enemy's resistance it is improbable that the passage of the Fleet into the Marmora will be decisive and therefore it is equally probable that the Straits will be closed behind the Fleet. This will be of slight importance if the resistance of the enemy could be overcome in time to prevent the enforced withdrawal of the Fleet owing to lack of supplies.

The supporting of attack of Army, should the Fleet penetrate to the Sea of Marmora, will be entrusted to the cruisers and certain older battleships including some of the French, whose ships are not fitted for a serious bombardment of the Narrows, this support will obviously be much less than is now given by the whole of the Fleet.

The temper of the Turkish Army in the Peninsula indicates that the forcing of the Dardanelles and subsequent appearance of the Fleet off Constantinople will not, of itself, prove decisive.

The points for decision appear to be : —

*First*—Can the Navy by forcing the Dardanelles ensure the success of the operations?

*Second*—If the Navy were to suffer a reverse, which of necessity could only be a severe one, would the position of the Army be so critical as to jeopardize the whole of the operations?

This message deserved very attentive study. It was clearly intended to raise the direct issue of the renewal of the naval attempt to force the Straits. In it Admiral de Robeck balanced the pros and cons, on the whole with an emphasis on the latter. But at the same time he intimated unmistakably his readiness to make the attempt if the Admiralty gave the order. His telegram caused me much perturbation. I was of course, as always, in favour of renewing the naval attack. But the situation at this moment was very different from what it had been in March and April, and in pursuance of Admiral de Robeck's decision of March 22 we were now following another line of policy. Three important events had taken place.

First, the Army had been landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula with a loss of nearly 20,000 men. That army was, it is true, arrested, but Lord Kitchener had told me that he intended to reinforce it with the whole Army Corps for which Sir Ian Hamilton had asked. The landing under fire had always been

the feature in the operation most to be dreaded. It had been accomplished, and it seemed that since the Turks had not been able to prevent the landing, they would certainly fail to stop the further advance of the Army, if the ample reinforcements which were available were rapidly poured in. There were, therefore, at this moment reasonable prospects of carrying the military operations through to success if adequate military reinforcements were sent with promptitude.

Secondly, Italy was about to enter the war. The Anglo-Italian Naval Convention which we had just signed obliged us to send four battleships and four light cruisers to join the Italian Fleet in the Adriatic. I had undertaken this on the basis which had ruled ever since March 22 that Admiral de Robeck had definitely abandoned the naval attack and that we were committed to fight the issue out by military force. The withdrawal of these ships from Admiral de Robeck's fleet, although mitigated by French reinforcements, was incompatible with a decision to make a determined or even desperate effort to force the Dardanelles by ships alone.

Thirdly, what we had so long dreaded had at last come to pass. The German submarines had arrived in the *Ægean*. One or perhaps two, or even three, were reported on different occasions in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles. The position of the *Queen Elizabeth* became one of exceptional danger, and the security of the whole Fleet at the Dardanelles was affected to an extent which could not be readily measured. Moreover, if the Fleet succeeded in forcing the passage and arrived in the Marmora, it would be harassed in that sea by German submarines. Though this fact was not conclusive, the action of the Fleet would be impeded and, on the assumption that the Straits closed up behind it, its effective strategic life would be to a certain extent curtailed.

Furthermore, the responsibilities of the Fleet now that the Army was landed and heavily engaged were very greatly increased. As Admiral Oliver pithily put it—'On March 18 the Fleet was single, now it has a wife on shore.'

All these considerations were present in my mind. Their cumulative effect was very great. Of course if Admiral de Robeck continued willing to make a decisive attack, it would be possible in a few weeks to recreate the conditions which would enable him to do so. Our naval resources were enormous and increasing almost daily. We could by the middle of June have raised his fleet to a greater strength than ever, and have perfected in every detail the preparations for the attempt. Moreover, by then we should have known where we stood with the German submarines in the *Ægean* and what that menace amounted to.

For the moment, however, the arguments against decisive naval action were very weighty.

On the other hand, I was extremely anxious for a limited operation. I wished the Fleet to engage the forts at the Narrows and thus test the reports which we had received about the shortage of ammunition. Under cover of this engagement I wished the Kephez minefield to be swept and got out of the way. These were perfectly feasible operations now that the mine-sweeping force was thoroughly organized, and the Dardanelles fleet, although reduced, was ample for their purpose. The elimination of the Kephez minefield would in itself begin to impel the communications of the army the Turks were building up on the Peninsula.

I could see, however, that Lord Fisher was under considerable strain. His seventy-four years lay heavy upon him. During my absence in Paris upon the negotiations for the Anglo-Italian Naval Convention, he had shown great nervous exhaustion. He had evinced unconcealed distress and anxiety at being left alone in sole charge of the Admiralty. There is no doubt that the old Admiral was worried almost out of his wits by the immense pressure of the times and by the course events had taken. Admiral de Robeck's telegram distressed him extremely. He expected to be confronted with the demand he hated most and dreaded most, the renewal of the naval battle and fighting the matter out to a conclusion.

On the morning of the 11th we discussed the situation together. I endeavoured repeatedly to make it clear that all I wanted was the sweeping of the Kephez minefield under cover of a renewed engagement of the forts at the Narrows, and that I had no idea of pressing for a decisive effort to force the Straits and penetrate the Marmora. However, I failed to remove his anxieties. No doubt he felt that if the operation were successful, the case for the main thrust in a subsequent stage would be enormously strengthened; and no doubt this was true. The Kephez minefield was his as well as the Turks' first line of defence. After our conversation the following letters passed between us:—

May 11, 1915.

DEAR WINSTON,—

With much reluctance, in view of our conversation of this morning, I feel compelled to send you the enclosed formal memorandum of my views respecting the Dardanelles, as it is essential that on so vital a point I should not leave you in any doubt as to my opinion.

Yours,  
F.

I have had no communication with Sir A. Wilson or Sir H. Jackson on the subject whatever.

*Secret.*

May 11, 1915.

First Lord.

In view of the recent intelligence of the position of affairs at the Dardanelles, I desire formally to put on record my views as to the subsequent progress of the operations. This is necessary because of the suggestion that you have made to me, that it may be expedient and a wise operation of war that the Fleet should again essay to attack or rush the Dardanelles Forts without assistance from the Army.

Our deliberations on the subject of these operations have been conducted either in personal conference or by the interchange of informal notes, and there is therefore no official record of the views that I have from time to time expressed. Although I have acquiesced in each stage of the operations up to the present, largely on account of considerations of political expediency and the political advantage which those whose business it is to judge of these matters have assured me would accrue from success, or even partial success, I have clearly expressed my opinion that I did not consider the original attempt to force the Dardanelles with the Fleet alone was a practicable operation.

I have always insisted that the North Sea is the proper theatre of operations of our Fleet, since there alone is it possible for the enemy to cause us irreparable disaster or for us to gain a decisive victory. For this reason I have looked with misgivings on the steady drain of our naval force to the Dardanelles during the last four months, whether the operations were to be conducted in conjunction with the Army or not. This collection of forces in the Mediterranean has been carried out so gradually that it has been difficult for me to decide at what point danger was threatened in the North Sea; yet each successive increment to the Fleet in the Mediterranean has appeared essential to the success of the local operations. Nevertheless, I was compelled finally to write to you some few weeks ago that I considered we had reached finality, and that no further depletion of our forces in Home Waters was permissible without grave risk in the principal theatre of the naval war.

Yesterday evening you sent me a draft telegram for my concurrence, giving a proposed reply to the telegram received from Vice-Admiral de Robeck earlier in the day. The general tone of this telegram implied that the Board of Admiralty



might be prepared to sanction the Fleet undertaking further operations against the Forts irrespective of the Army being unable to advance beyond their present positions. I made an amendment, without which I was not able to concur in this telegram being sent, inserting the words 'A naval attack cannot even be considered until the Italians, etc., etc.' I have not heard from you whether this telegram, or any, has actually been sent. I presume not, as I have seen no copy.<sup>1</sup> But it is clearly in my mind that you yourself would be prepared to sanction such a proceeding.

I therefore feel impelled to inform you definitely and formally of my conviction that such an attack by the Fleet on the Dardanelles Forts, in repetition of the operations which failed on March 18, or any attempt by the Fleet to rush by the Narrows, is doomed to failure, and, moreover, is fraught with possibilities of disaster utterly incommensurate to any advantage that could be obtained therefrom.

In my opinion we cannot afford to expose any more ships to the risk of loss in the Dardanelles, since the ships there, though not consisting in the main of first line units, are the reserve on which we depend entirely for supremacy in the event of any unforeseen disaster. Ships sent up to the Sea of Marmora before the Forts had been occupied by the Army would be exposed to great danger, in my opinion, both in getting there and after their arrival.

Before the naval attack on March 19, I expressed the opinion at the War Council that the whole operation, if pressed to a conclusion, would entail a loss of twelve battleships. Three battleships of the Allies were sunk on the 19th, and two others very seriously damaged, although they never came to really close quarters with the powerful batteries at the Narrows and never got close enough to attempt to cross a permanent minefield. If we now try to rush the Narrows, we shall first have to silence and completely control the fire of the very heavy batteries situated there, and then to force our way through minefields. The experience we have gained up to date does not encourage me to think that there is any reasonable prospect even of silencing the guns; the gunners will retire from them until we are to such close quarters that they cannot miss, and then the guns will be fired at hulling range.

<sup>1</sup> I cannot trace this draft. No doubt it was to the effect that while an attempt to rush the Straits could not immediately be authorized, operations should be undertaken to sweep the Kephez minefield under cover of the Fleet and force the forts to exhaust their ammunition. It seems probable that the words introduced by Lord Fisher destroyed the purpose and meaning of the telegram. It was not sent. Nothing was ever sent without his agreement.

The sweeping of the mines in the Narrows is an operation which, in my opinion, experience has shown not to be possible, even after the batteries have been silenced, until the heights on either side have been occupied by the military.

Even after the Narrows are forced we have still to deal with the Nagara group of forts, and there will certainly be further minefields beyond the Narrows and in the Sea of Marmora. Consequently, in addition to the heavy ships, we must pass up a sufficient force of mine-sweepers, without which the large ships will be powerless and caught in a deadly trap.

Finally, even if the Fleet or a portion of it is rushed through to the Marmora, it will not be possible to keep it supplied with coal or munitions or to push an Army up to co-operate with it; and as you yourself so pertinently pointed out in the early discussions on this question, a Fleet by itself can effect very little at Constantinople. Moreover, it would again lose disastrously in returning through the Dardanelles, merely repeating Duckworth's fiasco. We are dealing this time with highly scientific and skilled and trained Germans, and we cannot gamble on any possibility of inefficiency on the part of the defence.

There is the further menace of German submarines daily drawing nearer to the Dardanelles, and certainly acquainted with the minefields and able to pass into the Marmora, where they would deal destruction to any of our ships.

For the above brief reasons I cannot, under any circumstances, be a party to any order to Admiral de Robeck to make an attempt to pass the Dardanelles until the shores have been effectively occupied. I consider that purely naval action, unsupported by the Army, would merely lead to heavy loss of ships and invaluable men, without any reasonable prospect of a success in any way proportionate to the losses or to the possible further consequences of those losses. I therefore wish it to be clearly understood that I dissociate myself from any such project.

FISHER.

*Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.*

*May 11, 1915.*

You will never receive from me any proposition to 'rush' the Dardanelles: and I agree with the views you express so forcibly on this subject. It may be that the Admiral will have to engage the forts and sweep the Kephez mine-field as an aid to the military operations; and we have always agreed in the desirability of forcing them [the enemy] to fire off their scanty stock of ammunition. But in view of Hamilton's latest tele-

grams, this is clearly not required now. And it is my most earnest hope on public and still more on personal grounds that any real issue when presented will find us—as always hitherto—united. That shall be my only endeavour.

We are now in a very difficult position, whether it is my fault for trying, or my misfortune for not having the power to carry through, is immaterial. We are now committed to one of the greatest amphibious enterprises of history. You are absolutely committed. Comradeship, resource, firmness, patience, all in the highest degree will be needed to carry the matter through to victory. A great army hanging on by its eyelids to a rocky beach and confronted with the armed power of the Turkish Empire under German military guidance: the whole *surplus* fleet of Britain—every scrap that can be spared—bound to that army and its fortunes as long as the struggle may drag out: the apparition of the long-feared submarine—our many needs and obligations—the measureless advantages, probably decisive on the whole war, to be gained by success.

Surely here is a combination and a situation which require from us every conceivable exertion and contrivance which we can think of.

I beg you to lend your whole aid and good will; and ultimately then success is certain.

*Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.*

May 12, 1915.

Until the military operations have effectively occupied the shores of the Narrows, etc., no naval attack on the minefield can take place. But your letter does not repudiate this, and therefore, in view of our joint conversation with the Prime Minister prior to March 18, I have sent him a copy of my memorandum to you.

With reference to your remark that I am absolutely committed, I have only to say that you must know (as the Prime Minister also) that my unwilling acquiescence did not extend to such a further gamble as any repetition of March 18 until the Army had done their part.

Thus it will be seen that never after March 22 were the Admiralty and the Naval Commander-in-Chief able to come to a simultaneous resolve to attack. On the 21st all were united. Thereafter, when one was hot the other was cold. On March 23 and 24 the Admiralty without issuing actual orders pressed strongly for the attack, and the Admiral on the spot said 'No.' On May 10 the Admiral on the spot was willing, but the

Admiralty said 'No.' On August 18, under the impression of the disaster at Sulva Bay, the Admiralty raised the question again and authorized the Admiral to use his old battleships to the fullest extent, and the Admiral met them by a reasoned but decisive refusal. Lastly, in the advent of the final evacuation Admiral Wemyss, who had succeeded to the command, armed with plans drawn up in the most complete detail by Commodore Keyes for forcing the Straits, made vehement appeals for sanction to execute them: and this time the Admiralty refused.

\* \* \* \* \*

The bad news which came in from Russia, from France and from the Dardanelles at this time, and the impression I had sustained while with the Army, led me to issue the following general minute to all Admiralty Departments:—

*Secretary and Members of the Board.*

May 11, 1915.

Please inform all heads of Departments in the Admiralty that for the present it is to be assumed that the war will not end before December 31, 1916. All Admiralty arrangements and plans should be prepared on this basis, and any measures for the strengthening of our naval power, which will become effective before that date, may be considered. This applies to all questions of personnel, ships, armaments and stores, and to the organization and maintenance of the Fleet and Dockyards, which must be adapted to a long period of continually developing strength without undue strain. I await proposals from all departments for the development and expansion of their activities.

W. S. C.

I also minuted Director of Transports.

May 11, 1915.

You have been told to make arrangements for carrying three infantry brigades of a division, plus 1,000 drafts, with their first line transports and horses to the Dardanelles, starting on the 17th instant at the latest, and employing for this purpose among other vessels the *Aquitania* and the *Mauretania*. The Artillery and all other details of the complete division are to go at the earliest moment, which will be when the first transports return from the Mediterranean.

In addition to this sufficient transports are to be brought home from the Mediterranean at once to take another complete Infantry division to the Dardanelles; these should be ready to sail not later than the 30th instant.

Submit at once your scheme for these movements, notifying the military authorities, and taking all necessary steps in anticipation of further sanction.

W. S. C.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the night of May 12th the *Goliath* was torpedoed and sunk in the Dardanelles by a Turkish destroyer manned by a German crew. This event determined Lord Fisher to bring the *Queen Elizabeth* home, and he made upon me a most strenuous counter-demand to that effect. I did not myself object to this. The first two 14-inch gun Monitors (then named *Stonewall Jackson* and *Admiral Farragut*) were now ready; and I agreed with the First Sea Lord that the *Queen Elizabeth* should return, if they and other Monitors, two battleships of the 'Duncan' class, and certain additional vessels, were sent to replace her. He was very much relieved at this and was grateful. The position into which we had got was most painful. He wished at all costs to cut the loss and come away from the hated scene. I was bound not only by every conviction, but by every call of honour, to press the enterprise and sustain our struggling Army to the full.

I had now to break the news to Lord Kitchener. I invited him to come to a conference at the Admiralty on the evening of May 13. We sat round the octagonal table; Lord Kitchener on my left, Lord Fisher on my right, together with various other officers of high rank. As soon as Lord Kitchener realized that the Admiralty were going to withdraw the *Queen Elizabeth*, he became extremely angry. His habitual composure in trying ordeals left him. He protested vehemently against what he considered the desertion of the Army at its most critical moment. On the other side Lord Fisher flew into an even greater fury. 'The *Queen Elizabeth* would come home; she would come home at once; she would come home that night, or he would walk out of the Admiralty then and there.' Could we but have exchanged the positions of these two potentates at this juncture, have let Kitchener hold the Admiralty to its task, and sent Fisher to the War Office to slam in the reinforcements, both would have been happy and all would have been well. Such solutions were beyond us. I stood by my agreement with the First Sea Lord, and did my utmost to explain to Lord Kitchener that the Monitors would give equally good support with far less risk to naval strength. I recounted to him the vessels we were sending, and offered him the most solemn guarantees—in which I was supported by the Naval Staff—of our resolve to sustain the Army by the most effectual means. I thought he was to some extent reassured before he left.

The orders to the *Queen Elizabeth* went accordingly. I telegraphed to Admiral de Robeck to counteract any depressing effects from this temporary reduction of his forces, coming on top of the withdrawal of the four battleships for the Adriatic to meet the provisions of the Anglo-Italian Naval Convention. Anyhow, Italy was about to join us. A powerful fleet and a regular army of nearly two million men were about to be hurled into the scale against the Teutonic Powers. Only patience and firmness were needed to carry everything through to success. It was plainly impossible, in view of the withdrawals of ships, to make an immediate renewal of the naval attack. I therefore agreed with Lord Fisher in the following series of telegrams.

*Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.*

Two more infantry divisions with other reinforcements leave about 17th and 30th. Meanwhile arrival of German submarines in Turkish waters makes it undesirable to expose *Queen Elizabeth*. We are therefore sending you at once instead *Exmouth* and *Venerable*, and also, before the end of the month, the first two new monitors, *Admiral Farragut* and *Stonewall Jackson*, with 2 14-inch guns apiece, an effective range of 20,000 yards, firing a 1,400-pd. high-explosive shell, 10-foot draught, and special bulges against mine and torpedo.

You will be able to use the two monitors much more freely for all purposes, as they have been specially built for this work.

*Queen Elizabeth* is to sail for home at once with all despatch and utmost secrecy. You should make out she has gone to Malta for a few days and will return.

Secondly, an Anglo-Franco-Italian naval convention has been signed which requires us to provide four battleships for service with the Italian fleet as soon as the French squadron under your command is raised to a total of six battleships. *Queen, London, Implacable, Prince of Wales*, under Rear-Admiral Thursby, will, as soon as the French ships arrive, proceed to Malta in readiness for service with the Italian fleet in the Adriatic.

Thirdly, aforesaid convention also provides that four British light cruisers from your fleet are to go to Malta for service in the Adriatic as soon as the French cruisers under your command reach total of four. Independently of this, we are sending you *Cornwall* and *Chatham*. Names of French vessels and dates of arrival will be telegraphed to you later. It is probable they will arrive before June 1.

The utmost secrecy is to be observed in all these rearrangements, and no one except General Hamilton and your Chief of Staff is to be informed until actual movements take place.

*Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.*

May 12, 1915, 9.50 p.m.

329. Personal and Secret. From First Lord.

I hope you will not be discouraged by the recall of the *Queen Elizabeth* and the unavoidable changes in your fleet consequent on the Italian Convention.

The two monitors will go anywhere, and you will be able to use them with freedom.

They are the last word in bombarding vessels.

I am determined to support you and the army in every way to the end of your task, and I am quite sure that the result will amply repay the sacrifices and anxieties of the struggle.

*Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.*

May 13, 1915, 8.40 p.m.

343. From First Lord. Secret and Personal. Your 490.

We think the moment for an independent naval attempt to force the Narrows has passed, and will not arise again under present conditions. The army is now landed, large reinforcements are being sent, and there can be no doubt that with time and patience the Kilid Bahr plateau will be taken. Your rôle is therefore to support the army in its costly but sure advance, and to reserve your strength to deal with the situation which will arise later when the army has succeeded with your aid in its task. We are going to send you the first six monitors as they are delivered, and you will find them far better adapted to this special work than the old battleships. You will later receive telegrams about increased provision of nets against submarines, about fitting special anti-mine protection to some of your battleships, and about landing heavy guns.

On these telegrams—the last we ever sent together—Lord Fisher and I parted for the night.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT

The War Council of May 14—Lord Kitchener's Reproaches—My Reply—After the Council—The Necessary Measures—Minutes—A Conversation with Lord Fisher—The Italian Crisis—The Despatch of the British Cruisers—Lord Fisher's Point of View—Resignation of Lord Fisher—Correspondence—A New Combination—The Issue in the House of Commons—Mr. Lloyd George Intervenes—Mr. Asquith's Action—Sortie of the High Seas Fleet—Orders to the Grand Fleet—One Day—The Naval Situation at Dawn on May 18—Progress of the Political Crisis—Public Reaction—Sir Arthur Wilson's Letter—Correspondence with the Prime Minister—My Relations with the Prime Minister—Mr. Asquith and the House of Commons—The Formation of the First Coalition Government—A Visit of Ceremony—Sir Arthur Wilson's Persistent Refusal—The Interregnum—Carrying On—Telegrams and Letters—The U-Boat Menace in the *Ægean*—My Letter to Mr. Balfour—I leave the Admiralty—The Naval Position—The Inheritance.

THE War Council of May 14 was sulphurous. We were in presence of the fact that Sir Ian Hamilton's army had been definitely brought to a standstill on the Gallipoli Peninsula, was suspended there in circumstances of peril, was difficult to reinforce, and still more difficult to withdraw. The Fleet had relapsed into passivity. Lord Fisher had insisted on the withdrawal of the *Queen Elizabeth*: German submarines were about to enter the *Ægean*, where our enormous concentrations of shipping necessary to support the Dardanelles operations lay in a very unprotected state. At the same time the failure of the British attacks in France on the Aubers Ridge was unmistakable. Sir John French's army had lost nearly 20,000 men without substantial results, and General Headquarters naturally demanded increased supplies of men and ammunition. The shell crisis had reached its explosion point—the shortage had been disclosed in *The Times* that morning—and behind it marched a political crisis of the first order. The weakness and failure of Russia were becoming every month more evident. Intense anxiety and extreme bad temper, all suppressed under formal demcan our, characterized the discussion.

Lord Kitchener began in a strain of solemn and formidable complaint. He had been induced to participate in the Dardanelles operations on the assurances of the Navy that they would force the passage. Now they had abandoned the attempt. Most particularly had his judgment been affected by the unique



qualities of the *Queen Elizabeth*. Now she was to be withdrawn: she was to be withdrawn at the very moment when he had committed his army to a great operation on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and when that army was struggling for its life with its back to the sea. Lord Fisher at this point interjected that he had been against the Dardanelles operations from the beginning, and that the Prime Minister and Lord Kitchener knew this fact well. This remarkable interruption was received in silence. The Secretary of State for War then proceeded to survey other theatres of the war in an extremely pessimistic mood. The army in France was firing away shells at a rate which no military administration had ever been asked to sustain. The orders which had been placed for ammunition of every kind were all being completed late. The growing weakness of Russia might at any time enable the Germans to transfer troops to the West and resume the offensive against us. Thirdly, he proceeded to dilate upon the dangers of invasion. How could he tell what would happen? Great Britain must be defended at all costs, all the more if other affairs miscarried. In these circumstances he could not send Sir John French the four new divisions he had promised him: they must be reserved for home defence.

When he had finished, the Council turned to me—almost on me. I thereupon spoke in the sense of the series of arguments with which the preceding chapters should have familiarised the reader. If it had been known three months before that an army of from 80,000 to 100,000 men would be available in May for an attack on the Dardanelles, the attack by the Navy alone would never have been undertaken. Though matters had gone badly in many quarters and great disappointments had been experienced, there was no reason for despondency or alarm, still less to make things out worse than they were or to take unreasonable action. The Naval operations at the Dardanelles did not depend and had never depended upon the *Queen Elizabeth*. They had been planned before it was known that she would go. She was now to be withdrawn because of the danger of submarines to so invaluable a ship. She would be replaced by monitors and other specially designed vessels better suited in many respects to bombarding operations and largely immune from submarine attack. The naval support of the army would in no way be affected. It was no good exaggerating the value of the *Queen Elizabeth*, or supposing that a great operation of this kind could turn on a single vessel. As for the shell shortage, that would remedy itself if we made the greatest exertions and did not meanwhile embark on premature offensives without adequate superiority in men, guns or ammunition. Lastly, what was this talk about invasion? The Admiralty did not

believe that any landing in force could be effected; still less if effected, that it could be sustained and nourished. What grounds were there for supposing that the enemy, now fully committed to the eastward effort against Russia, would spin round and bring troops back to invade England or attack the Western Front? And how many would they bring, and how long would it take? Stop these vain offensives on the Western Front until the new armies were ready and sufficient ammunition was accumulated. Concentrate the available reinforcements upon the Dardanelles and give them such ammunition as was necessary to reach a decision there at the earliest possible moment. Discard these alarms about the invasion of an island no longer denuded of troops as in 1914, but bristling with armed men and guarded by a fleet far stronger relatively than at the beginning of the war and possessed of sources of information never previously dreamed of. Let Sir John French have the new divisions for which he had asked, but otherwise remain on the defensive in France.

I am not quoting the actual words in either case, but their gist. The sense is fully sustained by the abbreviated records. These considerations appeared to produce a definite impression upon the Council. We separated without any decision. My arguments were, however, accepted almost in their entirety by the Coalition Administration which came into existence a few weeks later, and every one of the suppositions on which they rested was vindicated by events. The departure of the *Queen Elizabeth* did not prevent the naval support of the army at Gallipoli nor its supply by sea. The British and French offensives in France continued to fail over a much longer period than this account covers, with ever-increasing bloody slaughter and the fruitless destruction of our new armies. The Germans did not and could not arrest their drive against Russia, which was in fact on the eve of its full intensity. They did not come back to the West, nor was it physically possible for them to do so for many months to come. They did not invade England: they never thought of invading England at this period, nor could they have done it had they tried.

However, events were now to supervene in the British political sphere which were destined fatally to destroy the hopes of a successful issue at the Dardanelles and preclude all possibility of a speedy termination of the war.

After the Council I wrote the following letter to the Prime Minister which I think shows exactly where I stood:—

*Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister.*

*May 14, 1915.*  
I must ask you to take note of Fisher's statements to-day

that 'he was against the Dardanelles and had been all along,' or words to that effect. The First Sea Lord has agreed in writing to every executive telegram on which the operations have been conducted; and had they been immediately successful, the credit would have been his. But I make no complaint of that. I am attached to the old boy and it is a great pleasure to me to work with him. I think he reciprocates these feelings. My point is that a moment will probably arise in these operations when the Admiral and General on the spot will wish and require to run a risk with the Fleet for a great and decisive effort. If I agree with them, I shall sanction it, and I cannot undertake to be paralysed by the veto of a friend who whatever the result will certainly say, 'I was always against the Dardanelles.'

You will see that in a matter of this kind *someone* has to take the responsibility. I will do so—provided that my decision is the one that rules—and not otherwise.

It is also uncomfortable not to know what Kitchener will or won't do in the matter of reinforcements. We are absolutely in his hands, and I never saw him in a queerer mood—or more unreasonable. K. will punish the Admiralty by docking Hamilton of his divisions because we have withdrawn the *Queen Elizabeth*; and Fisher will have the *Queen Elizabeth* home if he is to stay.

Through all this with patience and determination we can make our way to one of the great events in the history of the world.

But I wish now to make it clear to you that a man who says, 'I disclaim responsibility for failure,' cannot be the final arbiter of the measures which may be found to be vital to success.

This requires no answer and I am quite contented with the course of affairs.

I spent the afternoon completing my proposals for the naval reinforcement of the Dardanelles and for the convoying of the two divisions with which I understood and trusted Sir Ian Hamilton was to be immediately reinforced. Here are the minutes and telegrams.

*Minute by the First Lord.*

Secretary.

First Sea Lord.

Chief of Staff.

May 14, 1915.

Although there is good reason to hope that a speedy termination may be reached, it would now be prudent to assume that the operations against the Dardanelles will not take less than

three months, and to make all preparations on that basis. If success is obtained earlier, so much the better ; but let us make sure that it is not deferred longer. The operations have now reached a point where they may easily develop into a great siege similar to that of Port Arthur, though not so formidable. Our preparations should therefore consider and cover the following points:—

1. The provision of siege artillery, which could be used against the semi-permanent works, and the mounting on shore of heavy long-range naval guns which can, from the existing positions held by our troops, bring accurate fire to bear on the permanent defences.

2. The provision of landing stages of a semi-permanent character of Sedd-el-Bahr and Gaba Tepe,<sup>1</sup> with cranes, lines of railway, and all other facilities for handling large and heavy traffic.

3. Protection against the enemy's submarines by means of the establishment of regular lines of indicator nets watched by drifters, joining up Imbros with the Gallipoli Peninsula, and providing permanent protection along the western coast. In these tideless waters, and with the great quantity of indicator nets coming to hand, there should be no difficulty in this.

4. The battleships of the bombarding fleet should go by turns to Malta, and there be fitted with the best steel trellis-work protection against mines which can be devised. While the present lull in the operations continues there can be no need to keep the whole fleet at the Dardanelles, and every opportunity should be taken to afford the ships the necessary protection.

5. Seventy aeroplanes and seaplanes will be required, and preparations must be made to work up to this. Some of the heaviest seaplanes capable of carrying and dropping 500-lb. bombs are to be included. I will settle the details of this last provision personally with the Director of the Air Division.

W. S. C.

*Minute by the First Lord.*

Secretary.

First Sea Lord.

Chief of Staff.

May 14, 1915.

1. The fifth 15-inch howitzer, with fifty rounds of ammunition, should go to the Dardanelles with the least possible delay, being sent by special train across France and re-embarked at Marseilles. Let me have a time-table showing by what date it can arrive at the Dardanelles.

The two 9.2-inch guns will go to the Dardanelles, either in

<sup>1</sup> Anzac Cove is meant. Still more important was the need of piers and cranes at Mudros.

the two monitors prepared for them or separately, for mounting on shore. This will be decided as soon as we hear from Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

2. The following nine heavy monitors should go in succession to the Dardanelles, as soon as they are ready:—

*Admiral Farragut, General Grant, Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, Lord Clive, Prince Rupert, Sir John Moore, General Craufurd, and Marshal Ney.*

The first six of the 9.2-inch monitors should also go, unless the Admiral chooses to have two of their guns for work on shore, in which case the first four only will go. A time-table should be prepared showing the dates on which they can be despatched and will arrive. They can calibrate on the Turks. All necessary steps for their seaworthiness on the voyage should be taken.

In the case of the 9.2-inch monitors, it may be found better to send the actual guns out to Malta separately.

It is clear that when this large accession of force reaches the Vice-Admiral, he should be able to spare a portion of his battle-ships for service in Home waters; but it may be better to see how the monitors work and what use they are to him before raising this point.

3. Four of the 'Edgars,' with special bulge protection against the mine and torpedo, are now ready. They carry twelve 6-inch guns each, and supply the medium armament which the monitors lack. They would be specially useful for supporting the army at night, without risk from torpedo attack. They would also be useful at a later stage in passing a small torpedo-tube [mounted on shore] or escorting other ships that were passing. We have not found any satisfactory employment for them here. It is not necessary to provide crews for them. Working parties, which can take them out, will be sufficient. The Admiral can man them from his large fleet for any special service that may be required. They should start as soon as possible.

Let me have a report on the manning possibilities as defined above, and times by which they can arrive.

It will be for consideration, when these vessels are on the spot, whether a valuable ship like the *Chatham* should not be released for other duties.

4. The Third Sea Lord will make proposals for providing anti-mine protection for a proportion of the battleships employed, on the lines proposed at our discussion.<sup>1</sup>

W. S. C.

<sup>1</sup> For the final text of this minute, see Appendix I, from which it will be seen that I added two E class submarines to the vessels enumerated above.

Although there could be very little doubt about what naval reinforcements were needed, I did not want the demands to fall upon Lord Fisher with a shock. I therefore went into his room in the evening to talk over the whole position with him. Our conversation was quite friendly. He did not object to any of the particular measures proposed, but as usual he did not like the steady and increasing drain on our resources and the inflection given to our campaign by the growing demands of the Dardanelles. I then said to him that it was really not fair for him to obstruct the necessary steps at the Dardanelles and then, if there was a failure, to turn round and say, 'I told you so, I was always against it.' He looked at me in an odd way and said, 'I think you are right—it isn't fair.' However, he accepted the minutes and we parted amicably.

\* \* \* \* \*

Into this extraordinary period, when intense situations succeeded each other with dizzying rapidity, another event was now to break. Following the method which I had adopted since Lord Fisher came to the Admiralty, I resumed work in my room at about 10 o'clock that night. The Italian crisis was at its height. The Italian Government had resigned in consequence of the opposition to Italy entering the war, and this enormous and brilliant event which we had regarded as almost settled more than a fortnight before, now appeared once again to be thrown into the melting-pot. A little before midnight the Italian Naval Attaché, an officer ardently devoted to the cause of the Allies, asked to see me. He was accompanied by Admiral Oliver, who had a file of papers. The Naval Attaché said that the uncertainty and convulsions now prevailing in Rome made it vital that the arrangements for naval co-operation which had been conceived a week before in Paris should be brought into immediate effect. Under these arrangements we were to send *inter alia* four light cruisers to reinforce the Italian Fleet in the Adriatic. These cruisers were to reach Taranto by daybreak on the 18th. The Naval Attaché urged that their arrival should be accelerated. If they could arrive by the morning of the 16th, definite naval co-operation between Great Britain and Italy would be an accomplished fact, and this fact might well be decisive.

As I had myself negotiated the Naval Convention with Italy in Paris, I was of course fully acquainted with every detail. I had procured the First Sea Lord's agreement to all its terms, including the despatch of the four cruisers. These cruisers had been detailed. Fisher's green initial directing their movement was prominent on the second page of the file. No question of principle was involved by accelerating their departure by forty-

eight hours. It did not come within the limits of the working arrangement which Fisher and I had made with each other, viz., to take no important step except in consultation. It never occurred to me for a moment that it could be so viewed, nor did the Chief of the Staff suggest that we should wake up the First Sea Lord. He would begin his letters at about 4 o'clock in the morning and he would get the file then. I therefore approved the immediate despatch of these cruisers and wrote, as I had done in similar cases before, 'First Sea Lord to see after action.'

For more than ten years I believed that this phrase was the spark that fired the train. We are assured however by Lord Fisher's biographers that he never saw the Italian paper until after he had resigned. Admiral Bacon in his *Life of Lord Fisher*, basing himself upon the first-hand evidence of Captain Crease, states explicitly that the fact that I had on this night proposed to the First Sea Lord the sending of two more submarines to the Dardanelles in addition to the reinforcements we had agreed upon in the evening, was 'the last straw.' If this be true the pretext is not the less scanty. But the cause behind the pretext was, as these pages may perhaps have shown, substantial.

The old Admiral, waking in the early morning, saw himself confronted again with the minutes proposing the reinforcements for the Dardanelles which he knew he could not resist. He saw himself becoming ever more deeply involved in an enterprise which he distrusted and disliked. He saw that enterprise quivering on the verge of failure. He saw a civilian Minister, to whom indeed he was attached by many bonds of friendship, becoming every day a hard and stern taskmaster in all that was needed to sustain the hated operation. He saw the furious discontents of the Conservative Party at the shell shortage and the general conduct of the war. He saw a Field-Marshal in uniform at the head of the War Office, while he, whose name was a watch-word throughout the country, was relegated to a secondary place, and in that place was compelled by arguments and pressures he had never been able to resist, but had never ceased to resent, to become responsible for operations to which he had taken an intense dislike. The hour had come.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

When I awoke the next morning, Saturday, I received no morning letter from the First Sea Lord. This was unusual, for he nearly always wrote me his waking thoughts on the situation. I had to go over to the Foreign Office at about nine o'clock and was kept there some time. As I was returning across the Horse

<sup>1</sup> See also Appendix I, which contains new matter bearing upon this incident and involved certain modifications in my original text.

Guards' Parade, Masterton-Smith hurried up to me with an anxious face—'Fisher has resigned, and I think he means it this time.' He gave me the following note from the First Sea Lord:—

*May 15, 1915.*

First Lord.

After further anxious reflection I have come to the regretted conclusion I am unable to remain any longer as your colleague. It is undesirable in the public interests to go into details. Jowett said, 'never explain'—but I find it increasingly difficult to adjust myself to the increasing daily requirements of the Dardanelles to meet your views—as you truly said yesterday I am in the position of continually veto-ing your proposals.

This is not fair to you besides being extremely distasteful to me.

I am off to Scotland at once so as to avoid all questionings.

Yours truly,  
FISHER.

I did not, however, at first take a serious view. I remembered a similar letter couched in terms of the utmost formality earlier in the year on the air raids, and he had threatened or hinted resignation both in letters and in conversation on all sorts of matters, big and small, during the last four or five months. I was pretty sure that a good friendly talk would put matters right. However, when I got back to the Admiralty I found that he had entirely disappeared. He was not in the building; he was not in his house. None of his people knew where he was except that he was going to Scotland at once. He had sent a communication to the other Sea Lords which they were engaged in discussing at a meeting of their own.

I went over to the Prime Minister and reported the facts. Mr. Asquith immediately sent his Secretary with a written order commanding Lord Fisher in the name of the King to return to his duty. It was some hours before the First Sea Lord was discovered. He refused point-blank to re-enter the Admiralty or to discharge any function. He reiterated his determination to proceed at once to Scotland. He was, however, at length persuaded to come and see the Prime Minister. I was not present at the interview. After it was over Mr. Asquith told me that he thought he had shaken him in his intention, but that he was very much upset. He advised me to write to him, adding, 'If you can get him back, well and good; but if not it will be a very difficult situation.' The correspondence which follows tells its own tale. I tried my best. Again and again I had persuaded him by the written word. It was useless.



*Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.*

*May 15, 1915.*

The only thing to think of now is what is best for the country and for the brave men who are fighting. Anything which does injury to those interests will be harshly judged by history, on whose stage we now are.

I do not understand what is the specific cause which has led you to resign. If I did I might cure it. When we parted last night I thought we were in agreement. The proposals I made to you by minute were, I thought, in general accord with your views; and in any case were for discussion between us. Our personal friendship is and I trust will remain unimpaired.

It is true the moment is anxious and our difficulties grave. But I am sure that with loyalty and courage we shall come through safely and successfully. You could not let it be said that you had thrown me over because things were for the time being going badly at the Dardanelles.

In every way I have tried to work in the closest sympathy with you. The men you wanted in the places you wanted them—the ships you designed—every proposal you have formally made for naval action, I have agreed to.

My own responsibilities are great, and also I am the one who gets the blame for anything that goes wrong. But I have scrupulously adhered to our original agreement that we should do nothing important without consulting each other. If you think this is not so, surely you should tell me in what respect.

In order to bring you back to the Admiralty I took my political life in my hands—as you know well. You then promised to stand by me and see me through. If you now go at this bad moment and thereby let loose upon me the spite and malice of those who are your enemies even more than they are mine, it will be a melancholy ending to our six months of successful war and administration. The discussions which will arise will strike a cruel blow at the fortunes of the army now struggling on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and cannot fail to invest with an air of disaster a mighty enterprise which with patience can and will certainly be carried to success.

Many of the anxieties of the winter are past. The harbours are protected, the great flow of new construction is arriving. We are far stronger at home than we have ever been, and the great reinforcement is now at hand.

I hope you will come to see me to-morrow afternoon. I have a proposition to make to you, with the assent of the

Prime Minister, which may remove some of the anxieties and difficulties which you feel about the measures necessary to support the army at the Dardanelles.

Though I shall stand to my post until relieved, it will be a very great grief to me to part from you ; and our rupture will be profoundly injurious to every public interest.

*Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.*

*May 16, 1915.*

MY DEAR WINSTON,—

The Prime Minister put the case in a nutshell when he stated to me yesterday afternoon the actual fact that I had been dead against the Dardanelles operation from the beginning! How could it be otherwise when previously as First Sea Lord I had been responsible for the Defence Committee Memorandum stating the forcing of the Dardanelles to be impossible! You *must* remember my extreme reluctance in the Prime Minister's room in January to accept his decision in regard to the Dardanelles, and at the War Council held immediately afterwards I stated in reply to a question by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Prime Minister knew my views and I left the matter to him to explain.

Ever since (as I fear to your great annoyance) I have been, as you truly said the other day, in the unpleasant position of being antagonistic to your proposals, until the series of fresh naval arrangements for the Dardanelles you sent me yesterday morning convinced me that the time had arrived for me to take a final decision—there being much more in those proposals than had occurred to me the previous evening when you suggested some of them.

YOU ARE BENT ON FORCING THE DARDANELLES AND NOTHING WILL TURN YOU FROM IT—NOTHING. I know you so well!

<sup>1</sup> In December, 1906, the General Staff, after consultation with the Admiralty, had drawn up a memorandum on the question of attacking the Dardanelles. The conclusions of this memorandum were almost entirely negative. The two staffs deprecated unaided action by the Fleet. On the other hand, the General Staff cast great doubt on the feasibility of a joint enterprise. The Director of Naval Intelligence alone recorded an opinion that the General Staff underrated the value of co-operation by the Fleet in a joint enterprise, and thought it was 'within the bounds of possibility that an operation of this nature might be forced upon us by arrogance or outrage on the part of the Ottoman Government, and that in such an event there is no reason to despair of success though at the expense, in all likelihood, of heavy losses.' The Committee of Imperial Defence, on February 28, 1907, came to the following conclusion: 'The Committee consider that the operation of landing an expeditionary force at or near the Gallipoli Peninsula would involve great risks and should not be undertaken if other means of bringing pressure to bear on Turkey were available.' The relevance of these opinions to the conditions prevailing eight years later in the Great War has been fully discussed in previous chapters. Taken literally, they amounted to a confession of complete impotence.

I could give you no better proof of my desire to stand by you than my having remained by you in this Dardanelles business up to this last moment against the strongest conviction of my life as stated in the Dardanelles Defence Committee Memorandum.

*You will remain* and I SHALL GO—It is better so. Your splendid stand on my behalf I can never forget when you took your political life in your hands, and I really have worked very hard for you in return—*my utmost*—but here is a question beyond all personal obligations. I assure you it is only painful having further conversations. I have told the Prime Minister I will not remain. I have absolutely decided to stick to that decision. Nothing will turn me from it. You say with much feeling that *it will be a very great grief to you to part from me*—I am certain you know in your heart no one has ever been more faithful to you than I have since I joined you last October. *I have worked my very hardest.*

Yours,

FISHER.

*Mr. Churchill to Lord Fisher.*

May 16, 1915.

I am touched by the kindness of your letter. Our friendship has been a long one. I remember how in 1908 you tried to bring me to the Admiralty as First Lord. When I eventually came in 1911 I proposed to the Prime Minister that you should return to your old position, and only the difficulties which your enemies were likely to make at that time prevented the accomplishment of my first wish. As it was I followed your guidance in the important decisions which have given us the 15-inch gun and Jellicoe to-day.

Six months ago in the crisis of this great war you came to my aid; since then we have worked together in the very closest intimacy. One difficulty after another has been surmounted; vast schemes of new construction have been carried through; and tremendous reinforcements are now approaching the fleet. Over the whole range of war policy and naval administration there is nothing that I know of on which we are disagreed—except the series of events which have led us into the 'Dardanelles.' Even there we are agreed upon the immediate steps, for I shall not press any wish about reinforcements beyond the point to which you were willing to go—namely, the six earliest monitors. We are now fully agreed that the fleet is not to attempt to rush the Narrows, but is to support the army in its gradual advance upon the forts by land. Orders in this sense have been given with which you were in complete accord.

It seems to me that the only course now is to hold on, to

go slow, putting as many ships as possible in Malta and the Canal, out of harm's way, and using the destroyers which are out there to hunt the submarines and convoy the army corps which is now starting. If you came into the Admiralty to-morrow for the first time and looked at the problem as it is now, you would advise this as the only practical course.

You must feel as I do and as the War Council decided that whoever may be responsible for the original step, to withdraw now cannot be contemplated.

The announcement of your resignation at this juncture will be accepted everywhere as proof that the military operations as well as the naval at the Dardanelles have failed. The position of the army which has suffered a loss of 30,000 men in a joint operation will be jeopardized. The admission of failure at the Dardanelles, for so your resignation would be exploited all over the world, might prove the deciding factor in the case of Italy, now trembling on the brink. The knowledge of these facts forces me, not for my own sake (for the fortunes of individuals do not matter now), to appeal to you not to make your resignation operative until at least Italy has declared herself, for which the latest date is the 26th. Meanwhile Sir Arthur Wilson could, if you desire it, do your work.

There ought to be no reproaches between us, and you, my friend, must at this moment in your long career so act that no one can say you were unmindful of the public interests and of the lives of the soldiers and sailors.

In any case, whatever you decide I claim in the name of friendship and in the name of duty, a personal interview—if only for the purpose of settling what explanation is to be offered to Parliament.

*Lord Fisher to Mr. Churchill.*

*May, 16, 1915.*

DEAR WINSTON,—

As usual your letter is most persuasive, but I really have considered everything and I have definitely told the Prime Minister that I leave to-morrow (Monday).

Please don't wish to see me. I could say nothing as I am determined not to. *I know I am doing right.*

Yours,  
FISHER.

It was no use persisting further, and I turned to consider new combinations. I was by no means sure that I should not be confronted with the resignation of the other three Sea Lords. On the Sunday morning, however, I learned that Sir Arthur

Wilson had been consulted by the Sea Lords and that he had informed them that it was their duty to remain at their posts and that no case for resignation had arisen. I was led by this fact to ask Sir Arthur Wilson whether he would be willing himself to fill the vacancy of First Sea Lord. He asked for an hour to consider the matter, and then to my gratification, and I will add surprise, he informed me that he would do so. By Sunday at noon I was in a position to reconstitute the Board of Admiralty in all respects. I then motored down to the Prime Minister, who was in the country. I told him that Lord Fisher's resignation was final, and that my office was at his disposal if he required to make a change. He said, 'No, I have thought of that. I do not wish it, but can you get a Board?' I then told him that all the other Members of the Board would remain, and that Sir Arthur Wilson would take Lord Fisher's place. I understood him to assent to this arrangement. Later his private secretary mentioned in conversation that the situation resulting from the shell shortage disclosure and the resignation of Lord Fisher was so serious that the Prime Minister thought the Unionist leaders would have to be consulted on the steps to be taken. I saw from this that the crisis would not be by any means confined to the Admiralty. Mr. Asquith asked me to stay and dine, and we had a pleasant evening amid all our troubles. I returned that night to London.

On Monday morning I asked Mr. Balfour to come to the Admiralty. I told him Lord Fisher had resigned, and that I understood from the Prime Minister that he would approve the reconstruction of the Board of Admiralty with Sir Arthur Wilson as First Sea Lord. I told him Sir Arthur Wilson was willing to accept office and that all the other Members of the Board would remain. I said that if these arrangements were finally approved by the Prime Minister that afternoon, I would make an immediate announcement to the House of Commons and court a debate. Mr. Balfour was indignant at Lord Fisher's resignation. He said that it would greatly disturb his Unionist friends and that he would himself go and prepare them for it and steady their opinion. Nothing could exceed the kindness and firmness of his attitude. I spent the rest of the morning preparing my statement for Parliament, expecting a severe challenge but also to be successful. I still had no knowledge whatever of the violent political convulsions which were proceeding around me and beneath me.

I went down to the House with the list of my new Board complete, fully prepared to encounter the debate. Before seeing the Prime Minister I looked into the Chancellor of the Exchequer's room. Mr. Lloyd George then made to me the following disclosure. The leaders of the Opposition were in possession of all

the facts about the shell shortage and had given notice that they intended to demand a debate. The resignation of Lord Fisher at this juncture created a political crisis. Mr. Lloyd George was convinced that this crisis could only be surmounted by the formation of a national Coalition Government. He had accordingly informed the Prime Minister that he would resign unless such a Government were formed at once. I said that he knew I had always been in favour of such a Government and had pressed it at every possible opportunity, but that I hoped now it might be deferred until my Board was reconstituted and in the saddle at the Admiralty. He said action must be immediate.

I then repaired, as had been arranged, to the Prime Minister. He received me with great consideration. I presented him with the list of the new Board. He said, 'No, this will not do. I have decided to form a national Government by a coalition with the Unionists, and a very much larger reconstruction will be required.' He told me that Lord Kitchener was to leave the War Office, and then added, after some complimentary remarks, 'What are we to do for you?' I saw at once that it was decided I should leave the Admiralty, and I replied that Mr. Balfour could succeed me there with the least break in continuity; that for several months I had made him a party to all our secrets and to everything that was going forward; and that his appointment would be far the best that could be made. The Prime Minister seemed deeply gratified at this suggestion, and I saw that he already had it in his mind. He reverted to the personal question. 'Would I take office in the new Government, or would I prefer a command in France?' At this moment the Chancellor of the Exchequer entered the room. The Prime Minister turned to him. Mr. Lloyd George replied, 'Why do you not send him to the Colonial Office? There is great work to be done there.' I did not accept this suggestion, and the discussion was about to continue when the door again opened and a secretary entered with the following message for me: 'Masterton-Smith is on the telephone. Very important news of the kind that never fails has just come in. You must come back to the Admiralty at once.' I repeated this information to my two colleagues and quitted them without another word.

It took only five minutes to get to the Admiralty. There I learned that the whole German Fleet was coming out. All its three Battle Squadrons, both Scouting Groups and 70 destroyers were involved. A message from the German Commander-in-Chief to the Fleet contained the phrase 'Intend to attack by day.' The political crisis and my own fate in it passed almost completely out of my mind. In the absence of the First Sea Lord, I sent for Admiral Oliver, the Chief of the Staff and the Second Sea Lord,

Sir Frederick Hamilton, and we together issued orders for the Grand Fleet and all other available forces to proceed to sea. I was determined that our whole power should be engaged if battle were joined, and that the enemy's retreat should be intercepted.

*Admiralty to Commodore (T) and Captain (S).*

May 17, 3.40 p.m.

Cancel previous arrangements. All light cruisers, destroyers and submarines prepare for sea at once and await orders.

*Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief Home Fleets; 1st Battle Squadron, Invergordon; Battle Cruiser Fleet and 3rd Battle Squadron, Rosyth.*

3.55 p.m.

Grand Fleet is to prepare for sea at once.

*Admiralty to Senior Naval Officer Submarines, Yarmouth.<sup>1</sup>*

4.15 p.m.

Send all available submarines to Lat.  $53^{\circ} 35' N.$ , Long.  $5^{\circ} 0' E.$ , at once.

A destroyer will be sent to communicate orders to them. Should no orders reach them within four hours of arrival at position ordered, they are to proceed to Lat.  $53^{\circ} 56' N.$ , Long.  $6^{\circ} 35' E.$ , and spread 3 miles apart East and West.

*Admiralty to Admiral of Patrols.*

4.30 p.m.

Recall all auxiliary patrols from Dogger Bank immediately.

*Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief Home Fleets, Vice-Admiral 3rd Battle Squadron, Vice-Admiral 1st Battle Squadron, and Vice-Admiral Battle Cruiser Fleet.*

May 17, 1915, 5 p.m.

[After explaining the situation and transmitting our information, this telegram proceeded:—]

Grand Fleet including battle cruisers are to rendezvous at 4 a.m. to-morrow in Lat.  $57^{\circ} 14' N.$ , Long.  $0^{\circ} 18' E.$  Light Cruiser Squadrons should proceed to Lat.  $56^{\circ} 40' N.$ , Long.  $1^{\circ} 0' E.$ , as soon as possible and look out.

*Admiralty to all East Coast Patrol Centres.*

5.35 p.m.

Recall auxiliary Patrol vessels to the vicinity of the War Signal Stations.

<sup>1</sup> These positions can be followed on the Map on page 574 of Volume I.

*Admiralty to Rear-Admiral, Dover.*

6.32 p.m.

Send five submarines to Harwich as soon as possible to follow the orders of Senior Naval Officer, Harwich. . . .

*Admiralty to Rosyth, Nore, Dover and Admiral of Patrols.*

6.45 p.m.

Have all submarines under way and ready for service outside their ports and in easy communication by visual signals at 3.30 a.m. to-morrow. All available destroyers and scouts are also to be in readiness.

*To Admiral of Patrols only.*

*Illustrious* is to be ready for action at anchor with steam up at 3.30 a.m. *Brilliant* and scouts are to be under weigh inside Spurn Point at 3.30 a.m.

*Admiralty to Rear-Admiral, Dover.*

8.35 p.m.

Send the Tribal destroyers to join Commodore (T) and follow his orders. He will be patrolling on a line west from the mouth of the Texel at daylight to-morrow and they should join him as soon after daylight as possible. Warn destroyers that Commodore (T) has submarines with him.

*Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief.*

8.30 p.m.

Four submarines will be in Lat.  $53^{\circ} 35' N.$ , Long.  $5^{\circ} 0' E.$  by noon to-morrow.

Commodore (T) with four light cruisers and about fifteen destroyers will be patrolling from the Texel to a position 40 miles west of Texel from daylight to-morrow supported by eleven submarines.

Coast defence destroyers and submarines will be under weigh and in visual communication with War Signal Station at daylight to-morrow.

*First Lord to Commander-in-Chief.*

8.10 p.m.

It is not impossible that to-morrow may be The Day. All good fortune attend you.

A detailed review of our available strength showed that the position at the moment was exceptionally good. Our margins were everywhere at their maximum. I requested Sir Arthur Wilson and the Second Sea Lord, Sir Frederick Hamilton, to



sleep in the Admiralty at my house in order that we might be ready in concert to face the crisis which the dawn might bring. I did not return to the House of Commons but remained continuously in the Admiralty. Late that evening a red box came round from the Prime Minister enclosing a note stating that he had determined to form a Coalition Government and requesting all Ministers to place their resignations in his hands that same night. I complied with this request in the following letter:—

*Mr. Churchill to Mr. Asquith.*

May 17, 1915

. . . So far as I am concerned, if you find it necessary to make a change here, I should be glad—assuming it was thought fitting—to be *offered* a position in the new Government. But I will not *take* any office except a military department, and if that is not convenient I hope I may be found employment in the field.

I am strongly in favour of a National Government, and no personal claims or interests should stand in its way at the present crisis. I should be sorry to leave the Admiralty, where I have borne the brunt, but should always rely on you to vindicate my work here.

Having despatched this, I went to bed. In the morning I had prepared for a Parliamentary ordeal of the most searching character; in the afternoon for a political crisis fatal to myself; in the evening for the supreme battle on the sea. For one day it was enough.

\* \* \* \* \*

With the earliest daylight I went down to the War Room. From 3 a.m. onwards our directional stations had begun to pick up the Enemy Fleet. The German Fleet Flagship was found to have been in Lat. 53° 50' N., Long. 4° 20' E., at 2.9 a.m. She was thus some 126 miles westward of Heligoland and about 40 miles from Terschelling Island. All the Fleets were at sea. The Grand Fleet with its attendant squadrons and flotillas was hastening to the southward. Commodore Tyrwhitt with the Harwich flotillas, reinforced by the Dover destroyers and supported by eleven submarines, was off the Texel watching the narrow seas. It was only in southern waters that the enemy could strike an effective blow, such as attempting to block Calais or Boulogne. If this were their purpose the Harwich Force could either have attacked them by night, or drawn them into pursuit to the southward by day over a line of submarines. If by any means the German Fleet could be delayed in southern

waters, the opportunity would be afforded to the Grand Fleet of blocking their return to German ports, either off Terschelling or by the eastern route into the Heligoland Bight. The situation after dawn was therefore for some time of the highest interest.

\* \* \* \* \*

We got no further indication of the enemy's movements till 7 a.m. It then appeared that he had altered course and was steering south-east instead of west. All our faces fell together. Unless he turned again towards us, we should not be able to scoop him into our net. The morning wore on amid confusing indications. At 9 o'clock we learned that the German light cruiser *Danzig* had met with an accident—presumably from a mine—in  $54^{\circ} 40' N.$ ,  $7^{\circ} 5' E.$  Gloom settled on the War Room. This was much nearer the German coast. At last, at about half-past ten, it became certain that the German Fleet was on its way home. It had in fact—as far as we now know—been covering the laying of the minefields on the Dogger Bank which came into existence from this date. This operation being completed, the German Fleet re-entered the Heligoland Bight before our submarines could reach their intercepting position. The episode was over. All our fleets, squadrons and flotilla turned morosely away to resume their long-drawn, unrelenting watch, and I awoke again to the political crisis.

But my hour had passed, and during the afternoon, and still more the following day, I learned from a sure source that my position was being viewed with increasing disfavour by those into whose hands power had now fallen. I was not included in their conclaves, which proceeded with the utmost animation from hour to hour. The Unionist leaders on coming to the aid of the nation at this juncture made no conditions as to policy, but stipulated for half the places and patronage. Mr. Asquith had therefore to dispense with half his former colleagues. Those whose actions in the conduct of the war were held to have produced this disagreeable result were naturally the object of resentment in Liberal circles. Up till Monday night it had been under discussion whether Lord Kitchener should not be transferred from the War Office to some great position similar to that of Commander-in-Chief; but on Tuesday it was realized that his hold on the confidence of the nation was still too great for any Government to do without him. On Wednesday, Mr. Asquith issued the reassuring statement that both Lord Kitchener and Sir Edward Grey would remain in their respective posts.

On Friday the 21st, when Lord Northcliffe published an attack upon the War Minister of a vehement character, there was a spontaneous movement of public anger in many parts of the coun-

try, and the offending newspaper was burned upon the Stock Exchange. In the wake of these emotions it was natural that the vacant Garter should be bestowed upon Lord Kitchener, and he was at the same time awarded the Grand Cordon of the Belgian Order of Leopold. His rehabilitation was therefore complete. I alone was held to blame for all the upheaval and its discontents.

\* \* \* \* \*

The more serious physical wounds are often surprisingly endurable at the moment they are received. There is an interval of uncertain length before sensation is renewed. The shock numbs but does not paralyse: the wound bleeds but does not smart. So it is also with the great reverses and losses of life. Before I had realized the intensity with which political irritation was being focused on me, I had resigned myself to leaving the Admiralty. But on the Wednesday evening an incident occurred which profoundly affected my feelings and judgment. One of the Sea Lords informed me that Sir Arthur Wilson, who had already provisionally assumed the duties of First Sea Lord, had written to the Prime Minister declining to serve under any First Lord except me.

*Sir Arthur Wilson to the Prime Minister.*

May 19, 1915.

DEAR MR. ASQUITH,—

In view of the reports in the papers this morning as to the probable reconstruction of the Government, I think I ought to tell you that although I agreed to undertake the office of First Sea Lord under Mr. Churchill because it appeared to me to be the best means of maintaining continuity of policy under the unfortunate circumstances that have arisen, I am not prepared to undertake the duties under any new First Lord, as the strain under such circumstances would be far beyond my strength.

Believe me,

Yours truly,

A. K. WILSON.

This utterly unexpected mark of confidence from the old Admiral astounded me. His reserve had been impenetrable. I had no idea how he viewed me and my work. Certainly I never counted on the slightest support or approbation from him.

I was greatly disturbed and now found it very hard indeed to leave the Admiralty. In the midst of general condemnation, violent newspaper censures, angry Lobbies, reproachful colleagues, here at any rate was a judge—competent, instructed, impartial—who pronounced by action stronger than words—not merely an acquittal but a vindication. I knew well the profound

impression which Sir Arthur Wilson's action, had it been made public, would have produced upon the Naval Service. It would instantly have restored the confidence which press attacks, impossible to answer, had undermined. In no other way could the persistent accusations of rash, ignorant interference by the civilian Minister in the naval conduct of the war be decisively repelled. I felt myself strong enough with this endorsement to carry forward to eventual success the great operations to which we were committed. I felt that working with Wilson and Oliver, the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Staff linked together as they were, we should again have re-established that unity, comradeship and authority at the summit of the Admiralty with which alone the risks could be run and the exertions made which were indispensable to victory. The information which had reached me was confidential and could not then be disclosed to the public by me. It was not disclosed by the Prime Minister.

In judging my relations with Mr. Asquith at this time, it must be remembered that every action of mine in opening and pressing the operations at the Dardanelles had been taken with his full knowledge, approval and support. There was no question of reluctant assent or inadvertent acquiescence obtained from a partially-informed chief by a scheming subordinate. In fact, as has been shown, the supreme decision which Lord Fisher resented so violently had been given personally by the Prime Minister and could only have been given by him; and apart from this Mr. Asquith was always and has always remained a convinced believer in the policy of the attack upon the Dardanelles. I do not write this in any spirit of personal reproach. I knew only too well at the time what were Mr. Asquith's own difficulties. He had up till then, during the many years of our association, treated me with the utmost kindness; and I knew well that if he had had the power, he would have ruled the event far differently. The emergencies of the time were too grave and the forces and pressures operating upon individuals too violent for ordinary conditions to apply. Therefore there never was and never has been the slightest personal recrimination upon the subject. My criticism is on general and public grounds.

I am confident that had the Prime Minister, instead of submitting to the demand of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to form a Coalition Government, laid the broad outlines of his case, both naval and military, before both Houses of Parliament in Secret Session, he and the policy he was committed to would have been supported by large majorities. The impressive recital of all that the War Office had achieved under Lord Kitchener would greatly have mitigated the complaints on what had been neglected. I am sure I could have vindicated the Admiralty

policy. Moreover on May 23, towering over domestic matters, came the Italian declaration of War against Austria. The Prime Minister's personal share in this event was a tremendous fact. I am certain that had he fought, he would have won; and had he won, he could then with dignity and with real authority have invited the Opposition to come not to his rescue but to his aid. On such a basis of confidence, comradeship and respect a true national coalition could have been formed to carry on the war, and Mr. Asquith would have been spared that interlude of distrustful colleagues, of divided or more often mutually paralysing counsels and of lost opportunities, which reached its end in December, 1916.

I wish here to record the opinion that Parliament is the foundation upon which Governments should rely, and that the House of Commons in particular has a right to be informed and consulted on all great occasions of political change. The only safe course is that men engaged as members of a Cabinet in an agreed and common policy should stand or fall by a vote of the House of Commons taken after full debate. Departure from these simple fundamental principles led to a disastrous breakdown, at a most critical moment, of the whole machinery for carrying on the war. It led to delay in taking urgent action, which delay, as will presently appear, was fatal in its consequences.

It was only when Mr. Asquith's *Memoirs* appeared in 1928 that Lord Fisher's ultimatum to the Government was made public. Nothing could more clearly, or more cruelly, expose the mental distress and wild excitement into which the strain of war had plunged the old Admiral. Nothing could portray more vividly the volcano upon which I had been living and upon which grave decisions of war and policy had been pursued.

Lord Fisher had written: —

' If the following six conditions are agreed to, I can guarantee the successful termination of the war, and the total abolition of the submarine menace.

I also wish to add that since Lord Ripon wished, in 1885, to make me a Lord of the Admiralty, but at my request made me Director of Naval Ordnance and Torpedoes instead, I have served under nine First Lords and seventeen years at the Admiralty, so I ought to know something about it.

(1) That Mr. Winston Churchill is not in the Cabinet to be always circumventing me. Nor will I serve under Mr. Balfour.

(2) That Sir A. K. Wilson leaves the Admiralty, and the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the War Council, as my time will be occupied in resisting the bombardment of Heligoland and other such wild projects. Also his policy is totally

opposed to mine, and he accepted the position of First Sea Lord in succession to me, thereby adopting a policy diametrically opposed to my views.

(3) That there shall be an entirely new Board of Admiralty as regards the Sea Lords and the Financial Secretary (who is utterly useless). New Measures demand New Men.

(4) That I should have complete professional charge of the war at sea, together with the sole disposition of the Fleet and the appointment of all officers of all ranks whatsoever.

(5) That the First Lord of the Admiralty should be absolutely restricted to Policy and Parliamentary Procedure, and should occupy the same position towards me as Mr. Tennant, M.P., does to Lord Kitchener (and very well he does it).

(6) That I should have the sole absolute authority for all new construction and all dockyard work of whatever sort whatsoever, and complete control over the whole of the Civil Establishments of the Navy.

(Initialed) F.

19.5.15.

P.S.—The 60 per cent. of my time and energy which I have exhausted on nine First Lords in the past I wish in the future to devote to the successful prosecution of the war. That is the sole reason for these six conditions. These six conditions must be published verbatim, so that the Fleet may know my position.'

It is needless to say that this amazing document was answered only by the curt acceptance of Fisher's resignation.

\* \* \* \* \*

The formation of the new Government proceeded haltingly. Although by what was naïvely called a 'Self-Denying Ordinance' it was agreed between the party leaders that no Member of Parliament on either side who was serving at the Front should be included in the Administration, the adjustment of party and personal claims raised at numerous points obstinate difficulties. Though I was left alone at the Admiralty, I was fully informed of every phase in this intricate and by no means entirely edifying process. It is no part of my purpose to unfold these matters here: their chronicle may be safely left to the Grevilles and Crokers, of which posterity, and possibly even our own generation, are not likely to be destitute.

It was during this interval that I had the honour of receiving a visit of ceremony from Lord Kitchener. I was not at first aware of what it was about. We had differed strongly and on a broad

front at the last meeting of the War Council. Moreover, no decision of any importance on naval and military affairs could be taken during the hiatus. We talked about the situation. After some general remarks he asked me whether it was settled that I should leave the Admiralty. I said it was. He asked what I was going to do. I said I had no idea; nothing was settled. He spoke very kindly about our work together. He evidently had no idea how narrowly he had escaped my fate. As he got up to go he turned and said, in the impressive and almost majestic manner which was natural to him, 'Well, there is one thing at any rate they cannot take from you. The Fleet was ready.' After that he was gone. During the months that we were still to serve together in the new Cabinet I was condemned often to differ from him, to oppose him and to criticize him. But I cannot forget the rugged kindness and warm-hearted courtesy which led him to pay me this visit.

By the 21st it was decided that Mr. Balfour was to come to the Admiralty. In accordance with what I knew were the Prime Minister's wishes, I endeavoured to persuade Sir Arthur Wilson to serve under him. He remained obdurate. No arguments would move him. He was at some pains to explain that his decision arose out of no personal consideration for me, but solely because he felt he could not undertake the burden without my aid. All the same, there seemed to be a quite unwonted element of friendliness in his demeanour, and this was proved a year later during the Parliamentary inquiry into the Dardanelles. Not only did he then give evidence which was of the greatest possible assistance to me, but he drew up in a single night the cogent paper, already quoted in a previous chapter, on the technical gunnery aspects of the plan we had followed, and cast his ægis and authority over an enterprise which everybody was by then eager to condemn.

On the evening of the 21st I reported to the Prime Minister:—

'I have tried very hard but without success to persuade Sir Arthur Wilson to hold himself at Mr. Balfour's disposition. In these circumstances I would advise Sir Henry Jackson.'

This proposal was adopted, and meanwhile the process of Cabinet-making gradually completed itself. Mr. Asquith was good enough to offer to me the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster. This office is a sinecure of much dignity. I should certainly not have felt able to accept it but for the fact that he coupled with it the promise that I should be a member of the War Council, or War Committee, of the Cabinet. I felt that thus situated I should be able to bring whatever knowledge I

had acquired to the service of the Dardanelles expedition, and that it was my duty to aid and succour it by any effective means still left to me. I remained in the new Government so long as this condition was observed.

It was not till the 26th that the full list of the Government was announced and Ministers changed offices and kissed hands. The interval was full of anxiety. No councils were held on war matters and all questions of policy had necessarily to be reserved for the decision of the new Cabinet. No more troops were sent to the Dardanelles, and only day to day decisions could be taken. There was no First Sea Lord. In these circumstances I did the best I could.

*First Lord to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.*

May 15, 1915.

What is the position of the smoke apparatus? Very good results have been achieved here and are being daily improved. What plant have you got actually with you? Have you had time to see how it works? We have also developed here a white smoke apparatus made by chemical action, which is very dense and effective. This can be fitted in a few hours to destroyers and torpedo boats. Surely a device of this kind would be invaluable for blanketing off the enemy's searchlights if at any time the night sweeping of the minefield was resumed? Also both the black smoke made by burning oil from cones and the white smoke can be turned on and off at will. See that General Hamilton knows all about this. With the choice of positions enabling attack to be made from so many points of the compass, it might be possible to use the oil smoke apparatus on shore. The Government have also decided to use poisonous gas freely against the Germans. What do you and the General think about using this against the Turks? They will very likely use it against you.

Secondly, the Third Sea Lord is preparing designs of a simple form of mine protection which consists roughly of a light steel wire trellis-work fitted round the ship. Ships could go by turns to Malta to be fitted with this in dry dock. I cannot understand why we have not done this before in the case of ships not required for general seagoing purposes but for a special operation in landlocked waters.

Thirdly, you have not yet answered about the two 9-inch guns for landing on shore. Although we hope progress will be swift, every precaution must now be made on a three-months' basis, so that whatever happens we see finality in our task. Nine-inch guns mounted even in our existing positions would enable accurate fire to be brought on many of the forts.



A 12-inch gun on a railway mounting will be ready in July, and all preparations will be made to send it to you if the result is not achieved sooner.

Fourthly, what is being done about establishing strong semi-permanent landing stages with cranes, railway lines, etc.? This ought surely to be undertaken without delay, good contractors being employed. I am not sure how far this is our business or the army's; but if you let me know how the position stands, I can easily arrange harmonious action from here.

Fifthly, fifty miles more indicator net, a portion of which is 120ft. deep, is being despatched at once, together with additional drifters to lay and watch it. It should be possible for you to make a large zareba from Gaba Tepe, through Imbros, to Kum Kale or thereabouts, within which your ships can act with comparative safety.

Sixthly, I am making arrangements to have a very strong reinforcement of aircraft sent out, including machines which will carry 500 lb. bombs, more than equivalent to a 15-inch high explosive shell. Have you considered the propriety and expediency of an air raid upon Constantinople? The shipping in the harbour, the German Embassy, the Government buildings, the arsenal, etc., would be fair objects of attack, and the moral effect on the population would be serious. We cannot possibly spare you any more destroyers, but the question of more submarines is being considered.

*Admiralty to Vice-Admiral de Robeck.*

*May 16, 1915.*

We doubt as many as three German submarines being in the Mediterranean. One is more probable, but there may be two. The others may be Austrians. But it seems essential to review the situation. The leading brigades of the new army corps should arrive towards the end of the month, and the whole force be completed about a fortnight later. In this interval it should not be necessary to keep the whole fleet in an exposed position. If you can spare them from aiding the military operations, some of your ships might go to the Canal or to Malta, where they would be in safety pending a general attack. Eight or ten of your destroyers must be used as escorts to the transports from Gibraltar onwards if you can spare them. We cannot spare any. The policy is to get through this interval with the minimum of loss while helping the gradual advance of the army. Please telegraph your views, and also what ships you will be able to keep behind the net

at Mudros or in other safe places. The safe conveying of the troops is now a vital matter.

A few personal messages may perhaps be included here. I telegraphed to my brother, who held a position on Sir Ian Hamilton's Staff, as follows: —

*Mr. Churchill to Major John Churchill.*

May 18, 1915.

Fisher has chosen to resign at this awkward moment largely on Dardanelles question, and very large changes involving my leaving the Admiralty are in progress. But I am quite sure that your two friends<sup>1</sup> will be well supported, that the enterprise will be carried through and that the results will pay for all. I shall be in a position to help indirectly.

*Sir John French to Mr. Churchill.*

May 20, 1915.

I hear you are worried and troubled which grieves me very much. I do not think a word of sympathy is ever out of place, and I only send this one word to assure you that I am always with you in deep affection and admiration. You know you are always welcome here.

*Mr. Churchill to Lord Haldane.*

May 21, 1915.

I reproach myself with not having been to see you. I trust the vile Press Campaign, of which you have been made the object, will not prevail against the loyalty of your lifelong friends. I am so short of credit at the moment that I can only make an encouraging signal, but you must take the will for the deed.

*Mr. Churchill to Major John Churchill.*

May 23, 1915.

I have accepted the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with a seat in the Cabinet, and on the War Council: this will enable me to watch over the Dardanelles. Mr. Balfour follows me here to my great relief, and Fisher does not return. Although I am down, the policy goes on, and will be well supported.

*Mr. Churchill to Major John Churchill.*

May 26, 1915.

I hope our friend [Sir Ian Hamilton] will ask for all the troops he needs. K. is very friendly to the Dardanelles and

<sup>1</sup> The General and the Admiral.

means to make it go through ; but I am afraid of troops coming in so slowly that you will have to fight the whole Turkish Army in relays. Therefore, I strongly urge that all that is wanted should be asked for boldly. The new Cabinet will be partial to broad decisions, and now is the time.

*Sir John French to Mr. Churchill.*

May 29, 1915.

I grieve very much on account of all the worries that beset you. You have always spoken to me of the rest and happiness it gives you to be with the Army in the Field. Can you manage to come over again when the P.M. leaves, and try to detach yourself for the moment from these troubles and annoyances? A view of the troops and the enemy will change your perspective. . . . Dark days come to all of us in turn and it is then we want to turn for help and sympathy to affectionate friends—and you have many here.

Early on the morning of the 26th—my last at the Admiralty—arrived the sinister news that the *Triumph* had been torpedoed and sunk at the Dardanelles by a German submarine. However, my task was over, and before setting out for Buckingham Palace I wrote the following letter to the statesman on whom the burden of Admiralty affairs was now placed:—

*Mr. Churchill to Mr. Balfour.*

May 26, 1915.

I leave you one task of great difficulty which requires your immediate attention, viz., the protection of the Dardanelles fleet against submarine attack. Do not underrate the gravity of this danger. Unless it can be coped with, there are no limits to the evil consequences. For nearly a fortnight I have not had the authority to make important decisions. Your fresh mind and calm judgment will give the impulse which is necessary. I set out the following notes for what they are worth:—

1. The military operations should proceed with all possible speed, so that the period of danger may be shortened. Whatever force is necessary, can be spared and can be used, should be sent at once, and all at once.

2. Until decisive operations on land can be resumed, the Fleet must remain in the safety of Mudros Harbour—or the Suez Canal. Such ships as are required to cover the troops should, until the netted lighters arrive, be protected by colliers and empty transports lashed alongside.

3. As soon as possible ships must be provided which are immune from torpedo attack. As specified in my minute of

the 13th instant to the First Sea Lord, the nine heavy monitors should go out as soon as each is ready ; and the four 'Edgars' which have been fitted with bulges, and which supply the medium battery for bombarding purposes, should be sent at once. Nearly a fortnight has been lost in regard to the 'Edgars' by the interregnum here. Until these vessels arrive, and while no decisive land operations are in progress, the exposure of ships should be kept to the absolute minimum.

4. At least 100 trawlers and drifters, with 100 miles of indicator net, and eight more destroyers (which should on the way out escort transports) should be sent ; in addition to all the other measures which have been taken, and of which you will be told.

5. The protection against submarines must take the form of developing a great netted area around the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, occupied by large numbers of armed trawlers and seaplanes always ready. I want to emphasize the fact that action must be drastic and on a large scale. Much has been done already.

6. The measures to watch and net the mouth of the Adriatic, and to search for submarine bases in Asia Minor, to mine-in likely bases, to develop a system of intelligence regardless of expense, all of which are now in progress, must be pressed forward.

7. Punishment must be doggedly borne.

From the bottom of my heart I wish you success in this and all other anxious business which has been thrust upon you, and which you have so loyally and courageously undertaken.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus ended my administration of the Admiralty. For thirty-four months of preparation and ten months of war I had borne the prime responsibility and had wielded the main executive power. The reader who has persevered thus far in this account will realize the difficulties that were coped with, the hazards that were encountered, the mistakes that were made, and the work that was done. Dubious years, many misfortunes, enormous toils, bitter disappointments, still lay before the Royal Navy. But I am entitled at this point in the story to place on record the situation and condition in which the mighty instrument of our sea power and of our salvation passed into the hands of my successors. At no moment during all the wars of Britain had our command of the seas been more complete, and in no previous war had that command been asserted more rapidly or with so little loss. Not only had the surface ships of the enemy been extirpated from the oceans of the world ; not only in the North Sea had his fleets

and squadrons been beaten, cowed and driven into port; but even the new and barbarous submarine warfare had been curbed and checked. For more than a year to come the German High Seas Fleet scarcely quitted its harbours, and even when they did so, it was with no intention of fighting a battle and in the unfounded hope that they could return unperceived or unmolested. For eighteen months their submarine campaign was virtually suspended. In spite of modern complications which have been explained, the economic blockade of Germany was established and maintained, so far as it rested with the Navy, with the utmost strictness: scarcely any ship that the Navy had authority to touch ever passed our far-spread cordons. The maintenance of the armies in France and in the East proceeded every month on a vaster scale, without the slightest substantial hindrance upon their communications becoming apparent to our commanders at the Front. The mercantile fleets of Britain and of her allies moved with freedom in all directions about the seas and oceans: and an insurance rate of 1 per cent. left a substantial profit to the Government Fund. These conditions lasted during all the year 1915 and up to the last quarter of the year 1916. There never was in all the history of war such an unchallenged reign of sea power.

Meanwhile the British Navy was growing continually and rapidly in strength. The fruits of the exertions which had been made before and since the outbreak of the war were being reaped with each successive month. Battleships, battle cruisers, light cruisers in dozens, submarines in scores, destroyers in hundreds, small craft in thousands, were being armed and built, and were coming into commission in an unceasing and broadening tide. The manning arrangements to meet this enormous new construction were perfected for a year in advance. Every requirement known to the naval science of the day in guns, in torpedoes, in shells, in explosives, in propellant, in coal, in oil, and in auxiliary services had been foreseen and provided for in harmonious relation to the expansion of our naval power. At the Admiralty we were in hot pursuit of most of the great key inventions and ideas of the war; and this long in advance of every other nation, friend or foe. Tanks, smoke, torpedo-seaplanes, directional wireless, cryptography, mine fenders, monitors, torpedo-proof ships, paravanes—all were being actively driven forward or developed. Poison gas alone we had put aside—but not, as has been shown, from want of comprehension. Even for the new submarine campaign, not to burst upon us for nearly eighteen months, the principal safeguarding measures had already been devised: the multitudes of vessels were building; the decoy ships were at work.

Moreover the true war leaders of the Navy had already emerged from the ranks of peace-time merit ; and in Beatty, Keyes, Tyrwhitt, Pakenham, and I must add Lewis Bayly—though under a temporary cloud—we had masters of the storm capable of rivalling upon the seas and against the enemy's coasts the exploits of the famous sailor figures of the past. There remained only to devise and perfect those schemes of naval offensive which in spite, and indeed by means of, modern science and invention would have liberated the pent-up skill and daring of our officers and men. There was also at hand that prolonged interlude of ease and tranquillity upon salt water in which every plan could be worked out with sure and deliberate study.

From all this reward and opportunity Fisher, by his own impulsive, fatal act, and I, through causes which these pages expose, were forever disinherited. We lingered on, helpless spectators, until the period of halcyon weather came fearfully to an end and the very life of the State was plunged again into supreme hazard on the seas.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE EFFORT OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

The New Government—A Defective War Instrument—My Account of the Naval Situation at Home—The General Situation—The Eastern Theatre—The Western Theatre—The North Sea and Home Defence—The Question of Invasion—The Dardanelles—The First Meeting of the New War Committee—Lord Kitchener's Pronouncement—A Belated Decision—Duality of Opinion—Consequences of Delay—The Bulair Isthmus Question—Telegrams—A Starving or a Storming Operation—Efforts to Procure further Reinforcements—Mr. Balfour's Exertions—A further Note upon the General Military Situation—The Main Facts—Russia—Disappointments of the French Offensive—Grave Losses of the French Army—No Progress in Mechanical Warfare—Lack of Concert between the Allies—Man-Power—The Dominant Needs—The only Prize within Reach.

THE new Administration met for the first time on May 26. From the very outset its defects as a war-making instrument were evident. The old Ministers had made an accommodation with their political opponents not on the merits but under duress. The new Ministers were deeply prejudiced against the work which their predecessors had done. Had they been responsible they would no doubt have made a somewhat different series of mistakes. The Unionists had little confidence in the Prime Minister. Indeed, one of the questions they had most anxiously debated was whether they could assent to his remaining at the head of the Government. Mr. Lloyd George, the powerful politician whose action had compelled the formation of the Coalition, found himself on the morrow of his success in a position of singular weakness. He had ceded the Exchequer to Mr. McKenna, and found in the new Cabinet so largely his creation, an array of Conservative notables who regarded his political record with the utmost aversion. Mr. Bonar Law, the Leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, might well have expected this dominant post, and although he was not himself affected by personal considerations, much soreness remained among his friends. Whereas practically all the important matters connected with the war had been dealt with in the late Government by four or five Ministers, at least a dozen powerful, capable, distinguished personalities who were in a position to assert themselves had now to be consulted.

The progress of business therefore became cumbrous and laborious in the last degree, and though all these evils were corrected by earnest patriotism and loyalty, the general result was bound to be disappointing. Those who had knowledge had pasts to defend; those free from war commitments were also free from war experience. At least five or six different opinions prevailed on every great topic, and every operative decision was obtained only by prolonged, discursive and exhausting discussions. Far more often we laboured through long delays to unsatisfactory compromises. Meanwhile the destroying war strode remorselessly on its course.

Although without executive power, I was treated with much consideration by the new Cabinet. I continued to sit in my old place on Lord Kitchener's left hand. I was nominated to serve on the committee of nine Ministers which, under the title of the Dardanelles Committee, was virtually the old War Council. I was invited to prepare statements on the situation, both naval and general, and every facility was placed at my disposal by the Admiralty for marshalling and checking the facts. Lord Kitchener was also desired to present to the new Cabinet similar statements from the War Office standpoint. These papers were prepared with the utmost despatch. Meanwhile the education of the new Ministers in the inside and central point of view and their initiation in the secret and special information at the disposal of the Government continued. On June 1, I circulated my two documents. The first, dealing with the condition of the Navy, is printed as an Appendix.<sup>1</sup> The second deserves attention here.

#### A NOTE ON THE GENERAL SITUATION.

*June 1, 1915.*

On leaving the Admiralty after 10 months' war, during which I have followed attentively the whole course of the operations by land and sea, I think it right to put on record my view of the general situation.

##### *I.—Eastern Theatre.*

My appreciation remains the same as in the memorandum I gave the Prime Minister on February 25.<sup>2</sup> The Russian front may vary in position, but it will always remain an immense line of battle effectively containing very large German forces. The most serious factor in the Russian case is that for several months the monthly wastage of rifles exceeds the supply and that therefore the Russian infantry in the field must diminish. On the other hand, a comparatively slight retirement of the

<sup>1</sup> Appendix G. I trust it may be read.

<sup>2</sup> See page 607, Vol I



Russian line relieves so greatly the pressure upon her, and increases so greatly the difficulties of the German offensive, that there is no reason to fear that the processes by which Russia will revive and develop her military strength will be ruptured, or that she will not continue meanwhile to hold on her front great numbers of the enemy.

The entry of Italy (and almost certainly Roumania) into the war should more than repair in the Eastern theatre any deficiency in the Russian forces. Whatever the result of the collision of the Italian and Austrian armies, the subtraction of Austrian and probably German troops from the Russian front must be considerable. The possibilities of an Austro-German advance through Serbia towards Bulgaria—which I have always dreaded—certainly seem less menacing than three months ago. Taking a general view of the Eastern theatre I do not think we have to apprehend in the next three months any general Russian collapse or any state of affairs which will allow Germany to transfer to the West so much as 500,000 men.

## II.—*Western Theatre.*

I do not need to alter in any way my view on this subject, expressed in the aforesaid memorandum. The Germans have not yet the power, nor will they have it at any time during the next three months, to break up the British and French lines in the West. On the other hand, I feel more than ever doubtful of our ability to break the German lines.

Although attacks prepared by immense concentrations of artillery have been locally successful in causing alterations of the line, the effort required is so great and the advance so small that the attack and advance, however organized and nourished, are exhausted before penetration deep enough and wide enough to produce a strategic effect has been made. The enemy must always have some knowledge of the concentration before the attack. They will always have time to rectify their line afterwards. At an utterly disproportionate cost the line will be merely bent; and bendings of the line at particular points do not appear to compromise other parts. I expect we have lost more than 50,000 men since the beginning of April—two-thirds in attempts at the offensive—without appreciable results, in spite of the resolution and skill with which Sir John French has directed the operations.

I remain generally of the opinion I wrote to the Prime Minister on December 29, as follows:—

‘I think it quite possible that neither side will have the strength to penetrate the other’s lines in the Western

theatre. Belgium particularly, which it is vital for Germany to hold as a peace-counter, has no doubt been made into a mere succession of fortified lines. I think it probable that the Germans hold back several large mobile reserves of their best troops. Without attempting to take a final view, my impression is that the position of both armies is not likely to undergo any decisive change.'

We should be ill-advised to squander our new armies in frantic and sterile efforts to pierce the German lines. To do so is to play the German game. As long as the process of attrition works evenly on both sides we are on the road to victory. But a few weeks of an attempted offensive may inflict irreparable injury upon our newly-gathered military power.

The best that could happen for us would be a renewed German offensive in the West. There is little real prospect of this on the greatest scale. Even if 1,000,000 men could be brought from the Russian front—which is impossible—the British and French Armies should be able to hold their own and inflict decisive losses on the enemy. Time is on our side, if we do not squander our resources. The policy hitherto pursued by General Joffre with so much obstinacy appears not only to be the right one, but the only one; and his reasons apply to the British army even more than to the French.

Unless we are to continue the offensive by frontal attacks on fortified lines, the immediate deficiency in high explosive shell is not so serious as has been made out. For the defensive, as well as for manœuvring, shrapnel is the better, and it is the defensive that alone is vital to us. The deficiency in high explosive shell should be remedied as soon as possible, but meanwhile we ought certainly not to throw away our armies in making attacks without it. From this as from other reasons I deprecate strongly an impatient renewal of a British offensive on a great scale.

The one important military object which we should secure at this moment in the West is the taking over of the whole seaward flank of the line. I have always since November urged this. The interposition of a French detached army between the British left and the Belgians is a great and unnecessary source of weakness, and has already led to a bloody disaster. Our present military resources enable us to relieve the French in this sector, and every consideration of strategic prudence enjoins it.

It is a fair general conclusion that the deadlock in the West will continue for some time, and that the side which risks most to pierce the lines of the other will put itself at a disadvantage.

There is no reason to be disheartened about such a situation. Its general tendency is favourable to our ultimate success. We must of course give up hope of finishing the war this year; and all our plans ought to be based upon its continuance for another 18 months. The relative strength of the antagonists in the spring of 1916, both by land and sea, should be satisfactory to us; and before that time other means of wearing down Germany, and other fields of attack will present themselves. On this I will dwell later.

### III.—*The North Sea and Home Defence.*<sup>1</sup>

I have dealt separately with the naval position in the decisive theatre of the North Sea, and with the general state of our naval resources, present and prospective. The conclusion which may be drawn therefrom is that the superiority in strength and numbers of our Grand Fleet over the German High Sea Fleet is substantially greater than at the outbreak of war; and that this superiority will progressively improve during the next six months. I hope that the First Lord of the Admiralty, who has recently had the advantage of examining the whole situation with Sir John Jellicoe, may be able to confirm this with the authority of the new Board of Admiralty. If so, there need be no anxiety about the supreme and vital matter, namely, the result of a general battle at sea.

But the question of an invasion of England by a German army must be dealt with separately. The British Grand Fleet is concentrated in the North at Scapa Flow and the Firth of Forth; the Channel Fleet, which in the early months of the war was at Portland, is now at the Dardanelles; and the immediate naval defence of the eastern coasts of England, from the Tyne to Dover, is maintained by about 60 submarines, 150 destroyers and torpedo-boats, and 10 light cruisers or scouts. There are also extensive barriers formed by German and British minefields.

The Admiralty have always held the view that this is sufficient; and on May 13, at the War Council, I gave, with the agreement of Lord Fisher and Sir Arthur Wilson, the fullest possible assurances on the point. The reasoning on which the Admiralty opinion is based is familiar to all who have followed the last five years' discussions on the Committee of Imperial Defence. But the Admiralty now speaks with the knowledge and experience of 10 months of war, and of the methods of the enemy; and, while I was responsible, every high officer who knew the whole facts was convinced that the

<sup>1</sup> This passage was intended to allay Lord Kitchener's persistent anxieties about invasion, which complicated all military arguments at this period.

operation of landing a German invading army of 70,000 men or upwards in the present circumstances was one which the Germans would not attempt, and which, if they attempted, was doomed to certain disaster. It is not a question only of evading the Fleet, but of launching 70,000 men or upwards on the following enterprise, viz., to cross 250 miles of sea in the face of a decisively superior hostile navy; to disembark the army on an open beach (for all the ports are mined or otherwise defended), with all the chances of weather and the certainty of attack at the latest within a few hours by submarines and destroyers; to land in the face of opposition, for all the coast defence is thoroughly organized; to accomplish this task and land all the necessary artillery—field and heavy—on which German above all other armies rely, with all the stores, appliances, transport, and ammunition, without which a modern army cannot fight or live, within a period at the longest of 20 to 24 hours, after which they must with certainty be attacked from the sea by a decisively superior force, their escort defeated, their transports destroyed, and their communications irremediably severed; and then with what has been landed, and only that, to enter upon the conquest of Great Britain. That is the proposition, for the sake of which Germany is incidentally to risk the decisive battle with her Fleet.

It was, and I believe is, the universal conviction at the Admiralty that no sane Government will entertain it for a moment. That opinion would have been agreed to absolutely by every military authority who spoke for the War Office up to the outbreak of the war. It should be remembered that the body of doctrine assembled on this subject before the war was the result of prolonged and detailed discussions extending over many years and ending in a complete agreement among all—soldiers, sailors, and politicians—who took part in them. All that has happened during the war has justified and confirmed our conclusions, on which the Admiralty and War Office have, in fact, regularly and boldly acted.

The question of whether we are in danger of an invasion or raid need not be settled by reference alone to the naval forces available. The military forces in this country are now very considerable and are rapidly increasing. It cannot be argued that Germany will be able to dispose of Russia and Italy during the next six weeks, for instance, and also in the same time transfer large armies in the Eastern theatre to attack our lines in the West, and thirdly provide an Expeditionary Army for the invasion of England. Before a decision can be taken by the Cabinet on the main question of war policy now

outstanding, it seems desirable that we should know what forces will be ready in this country at particular dates during the next three months. It is all a question of numbers in relation to dates; and it should not be difficult for this information to be supplied.

The Admiralty have always stated that the War Office should be capable of dealing with a force of 70,000 men with light artillery, not because they think such a force would be sent or could be landed, but to make assurance doubly sure. Is it not possible to satisfy this condition during the next three months, and at the same time give Sir John French the necessary troops to take over the front from La Bassée, or even Lens, to the sea, as well as supplying Sir Ian Hamilton with the three extra divisions for which he has asked? That is a question which requires careful and detailed examination in relation to numbers, facts, and dates.

#### IV.—*The Dardanelles.*

The position at the Dardanelles is at once hopeful and dangerous. The longer it lasts the more dangerous it will become. The sooner it is settled the sooner everything can again, if desired, be concentrated on the French and Flemish front. The unexpected delays in beginning the military operations and the gradual manner in which the troops have been despatched have already given time for the Turks to make elaborate defensive preparations, to bring up reinforcements from Syria and elsewhere, and for the Germans to send submarines. If we delay longer in sending the necessary reinforcements, or send them piecemeal, we shall have in the end to send all, and more than all, that are now asked for, and we shall run the double risk of fighting the whole Turkish army in relays around the Kilid Bahr plateau, and of being seriously harassed by numbers of German submarines, which will certainly be attracted to the spot by the success which has attended the first one. It seems most urgent to try to obtain a decision here and wind up the enterprise in a satisfactory manner as soon as possible.

Neuve Chapelle and other battles in France have shown that our troops and the French, with adequate numbers and artillery, can storm the enemy's entrenchments. But no strategic results are obtained in France and Flanders, as Lord Kitchener points out, from making, at an inordinate cost, an advance of 3 or 4 miles. For beyond the ground captured so dearly lies all the breadth of Flanders before even the Rhine is reached, and before the artillery of the attack can move forward and re-register, a new line of entrenchments not less

strong than the old has been prepared by the enemy. But an advance of 3 or 4 miles in the Gallipoli Peninsula would produce strategic results of a decisive character. We have not at present enough high explosive shell for a sustained and continuous offensive in France, but the comparatively small quantities which are required at the Dardanelles are available. Here there is no room for new lines to be formed in rear, and no retreat for either side but into the sea. Every 500 yards gained here is an important step towards an imminent and vital result. And what a result !

As soon as our troops can obtain positions from which the Kilid Bahr plateau can be rendered untenable the whole Turkish army concentrated there is lost. As soon as the plateau of Kilid Bahr is in our hands the forts on the European side must be evacuated by the enemy. Those on the Asiatic are commanded from the European side. The door is thus opened to the Fleet, which at some moment in these operations will advance through the Narrows, sweeping the minefields methodically. Once the forts and minefields of the Narrows are passed there is nothing to stop the Fleet entering the Marmora, and, once in the Marmora, it is a few hours' steam to Constantinople. The Turco-German Fleet can then certainly be destroyed. Its destruction removes the menace which has hitherto prevented a Russian army from crossing the Black Sea and attacking Constantinople from the north. Although the Russian army which had been held ready to profit by our success has now been drawn away by more urgent interim needs, the Russians certainly will not let Constantinople fall without their participation. Bulgaria cannot remain indifferent to the movement and approach of these events. She will be inevitably forced to march on Adrianople, and with Bulgaria the whole of the Balkans must come out on our side. Any Turkish troops in other parts of the Gallipoli Peninsula will be incidentally cut off as soon as the Fleet severs the water communication with Chanak and closes the Bulair isthmus from both sides.

But the position of all the Turkish forces in Europe, whatever their numbers, is by the same series of events decisively affected. Their homes are in Asia, their food comes from Asia, their Government will have fled to Asia. They must fall into our hands with all their stores and artillery, as a mere by-product of the main operation. And all this depends on the conquest of 3 or 4 miles of ground ! Where else in all the theatres of the war can we look during the next three months for a decisive victory, or for results of this extraordinary character ?

The consequences of failure, on the other hand, are set out by Lord Kitchener in paragraph 32 of the War Office Note in a manner which leaves nothing to be said.

W. S. C.

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Lord Kitchener's review of the work done by the War Office under his direction, of the progress made in the vast organization of the new armies, the orders issued and the measures taken for their equipment and the supply of munitions, constituted an impressive recital. The effect produced upon the Unionist Ministers was similar to that which is often produced upon the House of Commons when a Government, having long been raved at in the Press and on the platform, is at last in a fully-ranged debate permitted to expose its own case. Opinion declared itself increasingly favourable to the prosecution of the enterprise at the Dardanelles and generally in the sense of the views which I had set forth on the military problem. It was not, however, until the afternoon of June 7 that the first meeting of the Dardanelles Committee was convened. It was composed of:—The Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener, Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Balfour, Lord Curzon, Lord Selborne, Lord Crewe, and myself.

Mr. Lloyd George, though a member, was not present on this occasion. Indeed from this time forward and for some months he immersed himself in the production of munitions, and concentrated his whole energies upon the task.

The Committee addressed itself to the requests for reinforcements contained in Sir Ian Hamilton's telegram of May 17. Lord Kitchener pronounced with the utmost decision in favour of prosecuting the campaign at the Dardanelles with the greatest vigour. He declared that he would reinforce Sir Ian Hamilton with three divisions of the New Army in addition to the Lowland Territorial Division, which had already been despatched under orders issued before the interregnum. He stated that he could not consent to remain responsible for the conduct of the war if it were decided to abandon the attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Council accepted this clear guidance not merely with relief but with satisfaction. Opinion was unanimous. The following conclusions were recorded:—

'1. To reinforce Sir Ian Hamilton with the three remaining divisions of the First New Army with a view to an assault in the second week of July.

'2. To send out the following naval units, which should be much less vulnerable to submarine attack than those under Admiral de Robeck's command:—

'*Endymion* and *Theseus* [light cruisers of the 'Edgar' class just fitted with bulges].

'Four monitors with 14-inch guns.

'Six monitors with 9.2-inch guns.

'Four monitors with 6-inch guns, and one of the latter to follow later.

'Four sloops.

'Two "E" Class submarines, now *en route*.

'Four "H" Class submarines.'

It will be seen that the naval measures decided on by the new Board of Admiralty and the new War Council were in principle the same, slightly extended, as those which had been previously pressed by me upon Lord Fisher on the eve of his resignation. The military decisions were, however, on a far larger scale than any which Lord Kitchener had countenanced hitherto. Besides the two divisions which it was in contemplation to send on May 17 and May 30 respectively (one of which had already gone), two others were added; and of the four divisions so assigned to Sir Ian Hamilton, three were to be divisions of the New Army, which was considered, perhaps unjustly, superior to the Territorial divisions at this period.

The conclusions of the Dardanelles Committee of June 7 were brought before the Cabinet on the 9th; and a very hot discussion arose on the general principle of whether the Dardanelles enterprise should be persevered in, or whether we should 'cut our loss' and come away. This was, in fact, going over the whole process by which the Dardanelles Committee had arrived at their conclusions. The sense of the Cabinet on the whole was however clearly with the Committee, and in the end it was agreed that the three divisions should go as reinforcements to Sir Ian Hamilton.

There was however from the outset to the end a duality of opinion in the Cabinet which although it did not follow party lines, resembled a party cleavage, and at every stage in the rest of the Dardanelles operations caused serious embarrassment. Had the Prime Minister possessed or been able to acquire plenary authority, and had he been permitted to exercise it during May and June without distraction or interruption, it is my belief, based upon daily acquaintance with these transactions, that he would have taken the measures which even at this stage would have resulted in securing a decisive victory. But from the moment of the formation of the Coalition power was dispersed and counsels were divided, and every military decision had to be carried by the same sort of process of tact, temporizing, and exhaustion which occurs over a clause in a keenly contested Bill in the House of Commons in time of peace. These facts are



stated not with a view of making reproaches where all were equally sincere and equally well-meaning, but to explain the melancholy turn of events.

We had now at length got on June 9 the kind of decisions which were necessary to carry the enterprise through to success. There was no *military* reason of any kind why the decisions which were reached on June 7 and June 9 should not have been taken within 48 hours of Sir Ian Hamilton's telegram of May 17. All the facts necessary to the decision were equally available on that date; all the troops were equally available; all the arguments were equally clamant. But from causes in which the enemy had no part, which arose solely from the confusion into which the governing instrument in this country had been thrown, from a fortnight to three weeks were lost for ever.

The consequences were momentous. Time was the dominating factor. The extraordinary mobility and unexpectedness of amphibious power can, as has been shown, only be exerted in strict relation to limited periods of time. The surprise, the rapidity, and the intensity of the attack are all dependent on the state of the enemy's preparations at a given moment. Every movement undertaken on one side can be matched by a counter movement on the other. Force and time in this kind of operation amount to almost the same thing, and each can to a very large extent be expressed in terms of the other. A week lost was about the same as a division. Three divisions in February could have occupied the Gallipoli Peninsula with little fighting. Five could have captured it after March 18. Seven were insufficient at the end of April, but nine might just have done it. Eleven might have sufficed at the beginning of July. Fourteen were to prove insufficient on August 7. Moreover, one delay breeds another.

The date of the next great attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula was governed by two factors—the arrival of the new army, and to a lesser extent by the state of the moon. It was considered that a surprise landing at a fresh point could best be effected on a moonless night. If therefore the dark period of July was missed, the operation in the particular form adopted must stand over till the similar period in August. It will be seen by reference to the decisions of the Dardanelles Committee of June 7 that they contemplated an attack in the second week of July, and believed that the three new divisions would all have arrived by then. This would have been the most favourable moment. It could certainly have been achieved if the decision had been taken promptly on the receipt of Sir Ian Hamilton's telegram, or, if pending a general decision on policy, the despatch of reinforcements by divisions could have proceeded while the Government

were considering the matter. But as it was, the troops that it was now decided to send did not or could not arrive in time for a July attack. The three New Army divisions did not, in fact, finish arriving until July had ended. Thus the great battle at Anzac and Suvla Bay was fought in the second week of August, instead of, as would have been perfectly practicable, in the early part of July. During the month that was thus lost, i.e. from the beginning of July to the beginning of August, *ten new Turkish divisions*, or their equivalents, besides important drafts, according to our now certain knowledge, reached the defenders of the Peninsula, and thus our new divisions, which we had at last decided to send, and which if sent in time would have given us a good superiority, were equated and cancelled out before they got to the spot. Moreover, in the interval our land forces were greatly wasted and reduced by sickness and casualties, and the fleet was exposed to continuous danger from submarines. The Germans acquired an ever-increasing control of the Turkish army, and the whole methods of defence were in consequence far better organized. The defeats of the Russians in Galicia during June and July produced a marked change in the fighting spirit of the Turks on the Peninsula. The removal from Batoum of General Istomine's army, which was thrown into the main Russian battle-fields, liberated the considerable forces which the Turks had been forced to keep concentrated at or near Midia to guard against a landing there. Before June was half over it became clear that the reinforcements could not reach the Dardanelles in time for a July battle. The second week in August was the earliest date when the troops would be there, and the nights would be moonless.

All these considerations were present in my mind and filled me with intense anxiety about the issue of the next great effort. I therefore laboured by every means open to me to secure even larger reinforcements and above all their accelerated despatch. I asked on June 11 that the plan of placing the new army astride of the isthmus of Bulair should also be considered.

*Memorandum by Mr. Churchill for the War Committee.*

*June 11, 1915.*

At the beginning of the military operations at the Dardanelles the seizure of the Bulair isthmus would not have produced decisive results, because the Turks could have held the forts at the Narrows with comparatively small forces, who could be fed from the Asiatic shore, and could have attacked from both sides with the whole of their best troops our force holding the lines of Bulair or some similar position. The

Narrows would still have been closed to the Fleet; and the army which was then available was not strong enough to operate except on very restricted ground.

But the situation has now completely changed. The flower of the Turkish army, all their Germans, the bulk of their artillery, is now massed around the Kilid Bahr plateau. They are held on two fronts by the southern Allied force and the Anzac corps respectively. They cannot afford to weaken their force at Kilid Bahr lest either one or both of the Allied attacks should be pressed home, in which case a great disaster would overtake them. On the other hand, to feed this large Turkish army, probably 70,000 strong, and to give it full supplies of ammunition and reinforcements, is a problem of great difficulty, failure in which means ruin to them. This army in the main is fed by the sea from Constantinople, and could not be fed without the sea. A supplemental line of supply passes along the Bulair isthmus, and this must be regarded by the mass of the Turkish army as their line of retreat. Any operation upon it must seriously affect their morale. It would be impossible to supply the large Turkish army at Kilid Bahr from Constantinople along the Asiatic shore (260 miles over mountainous and roadless country as the crow flies). A trickle of supplies and troops from Smyrna may reach them, but that is wholly inadequate for an army of this size.

The Turks are therefore in a position of being tied absolutely to Kilid Bahr, and can be starved out there if the sea communications with Constantinople are stopped and if the Bulair Isthmus is closed to them. If we now place a strong army astride of the Bulair isthmus, and if the First Lord of the Admiralty carries out his policy of placing the largest possible number of submarines in the Marmora, the above result would be obtained. The submarines could be replenished with food, fuel and torpedoes carried across the isthmus, and all could work together without the need of returning through the Straits.

It seems vital to us now to consider this operation in detail, as an alternative to the continuance of the frontal attacks from the two existing lodgments; and also to consider whether the troops now under orders for the Dardanelles are sufficient for the purpose. The British and French forces under Sir Ian Hamilton now on the peninsula have been so weakened by battle casualties and exhausted by their continual efforts that they cannot be expected to spare many men for a new point of attack; and it is important to keep them holding tight on to the Turks, and ready to profit by any weakening in their front. Are the three divisions of the New Army sufficient by them-

selves for such an enterprise if decided on? Would it not be prudent to send the two 1st line Territorial divisions now ready to form a fresh force of five divisions, *plus* the Territorial division already gone (if it can be spared from Sedd-el-Bahr), *plus* also every man that can be spared for a short time and a special effort from Egypt? Ought we not now to put these possibilities to Sir Ian Hamilton by telegraph fully and plainly?

W. S. C.

As the result of the discussion, Lord Kitchener sent the following telegrams to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

*From War Office to Sir Ian Hamilton.*

6 p.m., June 11, 1915.

Have you considered the advantage of landing troops on the Bulair isthmus, thereby cutting off the peninsula completely from the mainland and enabling us to send supplies overland to our submarines in the Sea of Marmora? What force do you consider would be required for such an operation? Do you consider that the troops landed would be liable to serious attack, and could they be adequately protected by the guns of the Fleet?

I presume that in view of the failure of the Bulgarians to carry them, the Bulair lines could not be captured without very severe fighting. If troops were landed and it was not possible to take the Bulair lines your force would be divided into three detachments.

Please telegraph me fully your views on this subject; if possible, I should be glad if you would reply to-night.

*War Office to Sir Ian Hamilton.*

5-45 p.m., June 12, 1915.

The Government are anxious to learn your views as to whether it is possible to cut off all supplies from the Turks on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and thereby force them to abandon the peninsula.

By means of submarines the Navy hope to be able to stop communication by sea with Constantinople, and, assuming that to be the case, two avenues of communication would still be open to the Turks, (1) via Bulair, and (2) from the Asiatic shore.

With regard to communication via Bulair, how do you consider that this line could best be stopped? On the isthmus, or somewhere between the Bulair lines and the Australian position, or by extending to the north the present Australian position? Or can you devise any other project to effect it?

With regard to communication from the Asiatic shore we should like to know whether the Turks can obtain a large amount of supplies from across the Dardanelles. We fear that it would be difficult entirely to cut off this source, but it may be that heavy ammunition and supplies for a large force are not transportable, on which point you will no doubt inform us.

Please let us have a reply at the earliest possible moment.

Sir Ian Hamilton replied to the first of these telegrams on the 12th:—

*General Sir Ian Hamilton to War Office.*

12.5 a.m., June 12, 1915.

I have given long and earnest consideration to the advantages of landing troops on the Bulair Isthmus, but have had to abandon the idea on account of the disadvantages. I do not like to telegraph my views without again consulting the Admiral, as the matter is largely a naval one. I will confer with him early to-morrow morning and then telegraph you again.

The Bulair plan fell through largely because of naval difficulties. Admiral de Robeck's objections to it are set out in various telegrams both from himself and from Sir Ian Hamilton. The decision was taken against Bulair and in favour of an operation across the peninsula from Anzac, or its neighbourhood. The Prime Minister, in the discussion, had drawn the distinction between a 'starving operation,' such as the seizure of Bulair, and a 'storming operation' such as was now decided on. It seemed to me that, what with the time lost and the character of the new operation, Sir Ian Hamilton required more troops than those assigned to him, and I therefore began immediately to press Lord Kitchener on this point.

*Mr. Churchill to Lord Kitchener.*

June 15, 1915.

It is clear that Hamilton has been deterred from the Enos-Bulair project by naval rather than military reasons. If it is decided, as I presume it will be, to push through from the Anzac position, there ought to be no doubt about the force employed being ample, and there ought also to be a strong reserve at hand. It is not a 'starving,' but a 'storming' operation against the enemy's main army, and within gunshot of his main position. Further, the ground widens out to the northward, and we must be prepared for attacks by large forces from that direction upon a battlefield no longer restricted. It is reasonable to suppose that von Sanders will have taken

whatever measures are open to him to guard against so obvious and vital a thrust.

Suppose the three first divisions now under orders do a great deal, but not all, and after three or four days' fighting are brought to a standstill with 10,000 or 15,000 casualties, both they and the enemy being exhausted; suppose two or three fresh divisions are then needed to carry the business through to complete success; and suppose there is nothing nearer than England, which means a month's delay, by the end of which you would have to begin all over again! There is my fear.

Prudence now would surely keep these extra divisions in Egypt under your control, so that you can, if they are needed, put them in in a few days; and if not needed, how easy to bring them back!

My feeling is that you now have the opportunity and the means of settling this business, but that, if this chance fails, it will be very bad for the Government and for the country.

*Lord Kitchener to Mr. Churchill.*

*June 16, 1915.*

We have been keeping all available transport busily employed, sending out reinforcements to the Dardanelles. The Lowland Division, for instance, was sent as soon as we could possibly get ships to take it, ditto the 13th on Saturday.<sup>1</sup> (I hear that, though troops were embarked, the ships have not sailed.) These will be followed in due course by the 11th and 10th Divisions, which will land us well into July, probably about the end of the month, so we have our hands quite full till then. Later we will make up a further programme, if necessary, but it would be as well to see how things go before doing so.

Greece may come in. Bulgaria looks like demanding territory from Turkey. No time will be lost.

Mr. Balfour, however, by most strenuous exertions, was able to undertake the transport of additional troops. For this purpose he had recourse once again to the great liners *Aquitania*, *Mauretania* and *Olympic*. For several weeks the Admiralty had shrunk from using these giants on account of the awful consequences if they were sunk with seven or eight thousand men on board. The new First Lord, as he gradually began to measure

<sup>1</sup> Had the transport available been used steadily to carry troops from the date of Sir Ian Hamilton's demand, no difficulty would have arisen. The fall of the Government and the absence of any decision to reinforce the Dardanelles were the sole causes of delay. This delay is estimated by the Dardanelles Commissioners at six weeks.

and appraise the values and hazards in this terrible sphere, resolved to repeat the action which I had taken, providentially without misadventure, five weeks before. In the end, therefore, the two extra divisions were ordered to sail, and it seemed probable they would arrive in time for the August battle. Meanwhile the Turks also on their side must be moving.

On June 18, I completed the following further general memorandum for the Cabinet. I endeavoured in this to show the relation which the attack on the Dardanelles took to the whole field of the war.

#### A FURTHER NOTE UPON THE GENERAL MILITARY SITUATION.

1. The following are the main facts about the general war situation:—

- (a) The German armies have successfully defended their own territory, and have conquered Belgium and large areas in France and Poland. They will very likely clear Galicia.
- (b) The British Navy has secured unquestioned command of the sea, and the naval forces of the Allies have an overwhelming and increasing preponderance; but the economic pressure on Germany has been largely mitigated by the action of neutrals.
- (c) The Russian Army is so short of munitions that, though they may hold large forces on their front, no decisive intervention can be counted on from them for many months.
- (d) The French offensive has up to the present failed completely. Their army is now at its maximum, and no expansion is possible.
- (e) Italy has entered the war; but the effect of this cannot be measured yet.
- (f) The increasing military strength of Great Britain.

Of the above facts, the first four are not likely to be substantially altered for some time, and the influence of the last two, though important, can only be secondary.

2. The Allies certainly hoped in the winter of 1914, when the German offensives in the direction both of Calais and Warsaw were arrested, that the spring of 1915 would witness the beginning of operations which would decisively clear French, Belgian, and Russian territory and carry our armies across the German frontier during the summer. From a survey of the present situation it would appear that the Allies have not succeeded so far in the campaign of 1915, and there is no

reason to expect them to do so later in the year. Germany has proved her ability to defend her own soil and her conquests. She is actively engaged in defending Austria-Hungary, and will in return acquire the full authority to organize the whole resources of that Empire on the German model. She has no doubt taken every necessary measure to provide for the food of her people, their economic life, and the supply of her armies; and this also applies to Austria-Hungary in a lesser though increasing degree. We are not entitled to assume that any shortage in men, food, munitions, and money will prevent the Central Powers from maintaining the war at least until the year 1916 is far advanced. The confidence of the ruling classes of Germany in finding a satisfactory exit from the war has been re-established by the progress of the conflict during 1915; and this relief is reflected by the embarrassments of the Balkan States, whose interests and many of whose inclinations are with us, but who are in grave doubt of our final victory.

3. It is necessary to dwell a little upon the military situations in the Eastern and Western theatres.

Speaking broadly, it would appear that the endurance of the Russian Power can be counted on. The rioting at Moscow is unpleasant. But the heart of the people is sound, and it is in the interest of the rulers to continue. The Russians have shown themselves incapable of invading Germany, or of carrying on a sustained offensive against the German armies. As soon as the Russian armies come into the radius of the German strategic railways, concentrations can be made against them which have proved destructive in every case. The number of trains which can be moved north and south on the German side of the frontier is at least three times the comparable Russian figure. This superiority of lateral communication applied to an 800-mile front has also enabled the Germans to deliver offensive strokes of the most formidable character. The reputations of Hindenburg and Mackensen are founded largely on this pregnant fact. On the top of this comes the Russian failure of munitions. But a retirement of 100 or 200 miles enables the Russians to recover their strength, and deprives the enemy of his advantage: and so long as the Russians do not risk too much in keeping a forward station, but retire in good time when pressed hard, returning if the pressure stops, there is no reason why they should not do their share of containing the Germans and Austrians all through the winter of 1915 and take the offensive in ample superiority in the spring.

4. On May 9 General Joffre began his long-promised offensive in the Arras sector; 1,400 guns and 20 divisions were employed. He had limitless quantities of high-explosive shell. He had the



loyal co-operation of the British on his left. After a month the French state that along their whole line, but principally in the Arras sector, they have lost 220,000 men. The British in the fighting around Ypres (the salient of which has been held as an aid to the French offensive) and in the attacks on the Aubers Ridge and towards La Bassée, have lost since April 22 4,000 officers and 96,000 men (exclusive of the most recent actions). The results are that the French have gained  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles on a front of about 5, and the British have gained, in face of La Bassée, less than half the ground they have lost around Ypres. Out of approximately 19,500 square miles of France and Belgium in German hands we have recovered about 8.

All this hard and fruitless fighting would be tolerable if the German losses had been equal to our own. Unfortunately there are no reasons for such an assumption. It may be doubted whether the German losses in May and June in the western theatre are a third of the Anglo-French total. The enemy has been very silent about the fighting on this side and has proclaimed no triumph. It may be that he fears we shall desist from efforts which it is to his advantage we should continue, while he wins remarkable victories in the East.

5. If the small area of ground gained by the French possessed a decisive strategic value and was likely to lead to the rupturing of the German lines and a consequent general retirement, the heavy cost would be justified. The attack is still proceeding, and no limit should be assigned to the exertions of a brave army. But a few general observations may be permitted.

At the beginning of the war, before the French had learned to entrench, the concentrated fire of an artillery massed for the offensive against lightly protected field positions and troops in manœuvre was very effective. But now that the armies are dug into permanent lines, properly constructed and wired, lined with machine guns, and well supported by concealed artillery, the power of the defensive is as 3 or 4 to 1. We are therefore in the unsatisfactory position of having lost our ground before the defensive under modern conditions was understood, and having to retake it when the defensive has been developed into a fine art.

It may also be doubted whether the accidents and undulations of ground play so important a part in tactics as formerly. It is easy to speak of acquiring 'the heights which dominate Flanders' or 'the Vimy ridge which gives access to Douai,' etc. In fact, however, the armies have in the main settled down, not in selected positions, but along the actual lines of their chance collision when they came into contact, and both sides

are maintaining themselves in all, or almost all, positions, good, bad, or indifferent. Therefore it does not seem safe to assume that particular slopes and heights possess tactical virtues of such supreme significance as to produce strategic results.

6. The events of the last five weeks in the eastern and western theatres make it the least fortunate period the Allies have experienced since the disasters of August last, and a continuance for another month or six weeks of similar results would produce very evil effects upon our general power. The French cannot afford to lose men at this rate for no return. Another quarter of a million shorn away will, together with the proved failure of their efforts to free their soil and the certainty of another winter's campaign, and the indefinite protraction of the war, produce depressing effects on the nation. Yet it is not easy to see what more we could have done to help them. Their attacks have been already made with all the guns and men possible to bring to bear upon a given point. Even if we had had more troops ready, or had sent to France all those now employed at the Dardanelles, the numbers would not have been sufficient to effect a decisive change in the situation, or, indeed, to do more than produce casualties over a larger area. Numbers after a certain point do not count towards the solution of the problem in the western theatre. The power of the defensive there is a factor permanently superior to any preponderance of numbers likely to be acquired by either side.

7. It is remarkable that during eight months of trench warfare, ingenuity seems to have had so little success in discovering means of offence and advance. We are now somewhat readily accepting the proposition that high-explosive shells used in unprecedented and extraordinary quantities will achieve decisive results. This has certainly not been proved by the results so far attained by the French offensive. The power of concealed machine guns to check an advance, the limited area upon which the most ample bombardment can be made absolutely crushing, the magnitude of the preparations and the effort required, and the consequent delay in pursuing any advantage gained are all factors which tend to modify any too confident conclusions on this subject. The method is effective for clearing a few miles of ground; but its applicability to the reconquest of Flanders and the advance through Germany is doubtful.<sup>1</sup>

Anyhow, let us have the shells.

<sup>1</sup> I did not then know how powerfully this argument was to be strengthened. The abundant supplies of high explosive shell which smashed the trenches in 1917 also rendered the ground to a large extent impassable, and thus substituted one obstacle for another.

But the suggestions made in Colonel Hankey's paper of January 1, 1915, ought to have been developed in the long interval that has passed. The problem of crossing two or three hundred yards of open ground and of traversing or destroying barbed wire in the face of rifles and machine guns by night or under smoke screens which cut off artillery fire ought not to be beyond the range of modern science, if sufficient authority had backed the investigation. The absence of any satisfactory method cannot be supplied by the bare breasts of gallant men.

Meanwhile, unless it can be shown that the capture of 2 or 3 miles of ground is likely to produce far-reaching and decisive strategic results, very grave reasons appear to exist against a continuance of the Anglo-French offensive.

It must be observed that this is no new view taken after the event. Six months ago (January 1), Mr. Lloyd George, Colonel Hankey, and myself, all working independently, submitted to the Prime Minister and to the Cabinet definite written statements in this sense. These opinions were generally accepted by the Cabinet, but the French and British generals in the field continued to make the most confident assertions to the contrary, and will no doubt continue to do so, in spite of all that has happened.

8. One of the most uncomfortable features of the war to the British Cabinet has been the absence of any true and timely knowledge of the French and Russian situations. The lack of any real co-ordination in the exertions and plans of the Allies has been evident at every stage; and this must be reckoned as one of the chief causes leading to the failure of the campaign of 1915. Hitherto we have not been a military partner of sufficient status to bring our influence markedly to bear on the counsels of our Allies. We have been forced to watch the British attack at Neuve Chapelle while the French remained wholly inactive. We have seen General Joffre embark on a great offensive about which we have all along felt the most serious misgivings, but to which we have conformed at heavy loss. We are now holding the Ypres salient and allowing the French to keep a detached army between Ypres and the sea in spite of arguments to the contrary, which seem clear, and have never been answered. If these discordances occur close at hand between armies intimately associated, the want of knowledge and of concert that prevails towards distant Russia, both on the part of France and Great Britain, can be imagined; and what do we know of Italy?

Unless the campaign of 1916 is to take the same unsatisfactory course as that of 1915 has so far taken, it appears vital to assert a far higher degree of common action and for the great

belligerents to make plans together which, albeit after a painful interval, will offer the prospect of finality and set a term to the miseries of Europe.

9. The strain of the war presses in varying degrees upon the combatant Powers. Germany and Austria-Hungary have no choice at present but to fight on, and the strain to which they are subjected is measured only by its physical effects. The first and governing of these is the wastage of military males. This is severe and irreparable; but it can be mitigated by making more use of the Austrian population, and by bringing youths of 18, 17, and even 16, of which the numbers are very large in Germany, into military service of one kind or another, and by using the enormous number of prisoners of war as slaves for unskilled domestic labour. We have not yet got, as we ought to have, the results of a thorough and scientific inquiry into the military male populations of the belligerent countries. But it would be imprudent to count on the Central Powers putting less than 6,000,000 men in the ranks of their active armies in the spring of 1916.

400,000 or 500,000 should be added to this total on account of Turkey, unless that Power has been knocked out decisively.

Great Britain has not suffered at all from the war except financially, and is developing her military strength in a leisurely but steady manner. We ought not to be content to begin the spring of 1916 with less than 2,000,000 men continuously maintained in the active army at the front. This would mean a total force of 3,000,000, and provision against wastage thereafter.

But in this case the governing factor will be rifles, and I apprehend that the equivalent of 1,500,000 men in the field is the most that can at present be provided for by May 1.

Italy comes in fresh, but it will tax her resources and temper to maintain 1,000,000 soldiers in contact with the enemy up to May, 1916, and onwards. The danger of the German armies being turned from Russia on to Italy seems certainly more real than their renewal of an offensive in the West.

France has reached her maximum, and presents a force of 2,000,000 men in the active army, well sustained by another 1,000,000 behind. But of all the great combatants France has suffered most, in the conquest and alienation of her territory and in the proportion of her killed, wounded, and captured to her limited population. She has not the reserves of youth that are coming on in Germany. She is cruelly oppressed by the war, which, unlike the Germans, she did not seek, and whose conditions are not favourable to the French offensive genius. No gleam of success has come to her arms. France is also the

belligerent to whom an attractive peace proposition can most easily be made. The comforting and sustaining of France through another winter campaign is a matter of very high consequence.

Russia, then, alone offers the means of providing the Allies with the very large numerical preponderance which they will require to wear down the armies of the Central Powers. To acquire influence over Russia, to organize and equip her is the most important need. By May, 1916, Russia ought to have between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 men in the line. The balance of active armies would then stand: Central Powers 6,000,000, Allies 8,000,000 or 9,000,000, with larger resources for replenishment on our side than on the enemy's. If by then we have induced Bulgaria, Greece, and Roumania to enter the conflict, with active armies aggregating, with Serbia and Montenegro (say) 1,000,000 men, the final result should be certain.

The above figures are general approximations, and, though I believe them to give a true impression, they are not the result of precise calculation.

10. However these vast problems are approached, the dominant needs emerge in clear sequence.

First, to re-equip Russia for 1916.

Secondly, to rally the Balkan States against Austria and Turkey, thus forcing the Central Powers to bleed along a new front, and at the same time protecting Italy.

Thirdly, to nurse France through the winter.

But in order that a voice may be heard amid the indistinct murmurings or unconvincing assertions of the various Governments, it is necessary that one of the Powers should speak, not only with the consciousness of a clear policy, but with the indispensable prestige of victory. It is open to Great Britain now to take the necessary lead in the Allied Councils. She commands the sea. In that respect her primary weapon has vindicated itself even more decisively than the German army. She wields the power of the purse. She is becoming an important arsenal of munitions. Her military strength, which has for some months been respectable, is growing substantially. She only requires victory to give her the ascendancy without which no good common action is to be expected.

11. There can be no doubt that we now possess the means and the power to take Constantinople before the end of the summer if we act with decision and with a due sense of proportion. The striking down of one of the three hostile

Empires against which we are contending, and the fall to our arms of one of the most famous capitals in the world, with the results which must flow therefrom, will, conjoined with our other advantages, confer upon us a far-reaching influence among the Allies, and enable us to ensure their indispensable co-operation. Most of all, it will react on Russia. It will give the encouragement so sorely needed. It will give the reward so long desired. It will render a service to an Ally unparalleled in the history of nations. It will multiply the resources and open the channel for the re-equipment of the Russian armies. It will dominate the Balkan situation and cover Italy. It will resound through Asia. Here is the prize, and the only prize, which lies within reach this year. It can certainly be won without unreasonable expense, and within a comparatively short time. But we must act now, and on a scale which makes speedy success certain.

W. S. C.

*June 18, 1915.*

## CHAPTER XX

### THE DARKENING SCENE

Strategy of Hindenburg and Ludendorff—The Austrian Plan—Gorlice-Tarnow—The Great Russian Retreat—On the Gallipoli Peninsula—Action of June 4—Action of June 28—Failure in the Supply of British Drafts—Scarcity of Artillery Ammunition—Admiral von Usedom's Correspondence with the German Emperor—Successful Measures against the U-boat Attack—British Submarines in the Marmora—Exploits and Adventures—Nasmith and Boyle—Losses and Achievements—The Turkish Sea Communications Cut—My July Memorandum—Appreciations and Forecasts—Increasing Danger to the Balkans—The German Point of View—The True German Objective—My Letter to Sir Ian Hamilton—The Actual Facts—Egyptian Obscurities—Ammunition Supply—The Eve of Battle.

MAY and June saw the beginning of the great Russian retreat. Up till the end of March the strategy of Hindenburg and Ludendorff had aimed at the encirclement and capture of entire Russian armies. They had made their first cast towards Warsaw in November, 1914, but the German and Austrian forces were not strong enough to sustain so ambitious a conception, and the attempt was skilfully frustrated by the Grand Duke. They tried a second cast in January—this time Northward against the Russian armies in East Prussia. But although nearly 100,000 prisoners were captured in the fearful winter battle of the Masurian Lakes, the bulk of the Russian armies slipped away as the Germans closed round them, and no strategic result was attained. 'The plan was good and this time the forces employed were adequate, but the season was badly chosen and the difficulties of a winter campaign under estimated.'<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of March, 1915, the entire Eastern front had again subsided into trench warfare, and on March 22 Przemyśl fell to the Russian Southern group of armies, setting free large Russian forces for the invasion of Hungary. The second Hindenburg-Ludendorff attempt to procure a supreme decision in the East had failed. But now a suggestion came from the Austrian Chief-of-the-Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, to force the Russians out of the trenches by a break through on a limited front. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, still intent upon repeating Tannenberg, opposed the Austrian plan, and wished in spite of their previous disappointments to achieve strategic results by

<sup>1</sup> General von François: a German authority.

undertaking another enveloping operation from the North on an even larger scale. For this the German Main Headquarters could find neither the men nor the munitions which were needed, and on April 4 Falkenhayn, who had succeeded Moltke as Chief of the German General Staff, decided to adopt the Austrian conception and to attempt a break through between Gorlice and Tarnow as Conrad von Hötendorf had proposed. Tarnow lies in Galicia, near Cracow, at the junction of the Biala and the Dunajec Rivers, and Gorlice, just north of the Carpathians, is about twenty-five miles south-east of Tarnow. The sector of attack lay on the south side of the Russian salient in Galicia, so that a considerable portion of the Russian front lay to the west of the German line of advance, under the menace of being cut off should it succeed. The blow was an upper-cut.

The German-Austrian attack began on May 2. It had been entrusted to Mackensen. Aided by poison gas and a tremendous artillery, the attack was immediately successful, both the first and second Russian positions being captured. The strategic instinct of Conrad von Hötendorf was also to be vindicated, for the Grand Duke Nicholas, rather than allow the troops on either side of the gap to be taken in flank, withdrew the whole line in this part of the front. This process of attack on a limited front was repeated continuously by the Germans during the months that followed, and each time it induced large withdrawals of the Russian line, culminating in the clearance of the whole of Galicia and Poland, and the fall one after another of all the fortresses and towns on which the Russian armies had rested.

As this sombre development was recorded day after day during June and July on our maps, Lord Kitchener became increasingly anxious. He feared that Russia would collapse entirely, and that the Germans would then transfer immense forces from the Eastern to the Western front. He persuaded himself, on more than one occasion, that this transference was already in progress and that a hostile offensive in France was imminent. For reasons which have been abundantly explained I could not share these apprehensions, and I endeavoured to combat them on every occasion. I believed that the Russians would succeed in retaining very large Austro-German armies on their front for an indefinite period. I did not believe that the Germans had any intention of abandoning their drive against Russia or of going back and re-opening an offensive in the West. Lastly, I pointed continuously to victory at the Dardanelles as the sole and supreme remedy open to us for the evils of our situation.

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While Ministerial changes and Cabinet discussions had been



taking place at home, the situation at the Dardanelles and on the Gallipoli Peninsula had passed through several critical phases. On May 19 the Turks, having received news of the arrival of German submarines, made a most determined and serious effort to drive the Anzacs into the sea. The attack, in which four divisions comprising 30,000 Turkish infantry took part, was maintained for many hours both in darkness and in daylight. It was completely and decisively repulsed at every point. When it ceased the Turks had lost at least 5,000 men, and 3,000 of their dead lay in front of the Anzac trenches. The British loss, on the other hand, did not exceed 600. On the morrow the Turkish Commander asked for an armistice to bury the dead and collect the wounded, and this was conceded by Sir Ian Hamilton.

'After May 19,' said the Turkish War Office when the war was over, 'it was realized that the British defence at Anzac was too strong to enable us to effect anything against it without heavy artillery with plenty of ammunition, and since our own position was also very strong in defence, two weak divisions were left in the trenches and the other two were withdrawn.'

The position at Anzac was henceforward unchallenged.

On June 4 a general attack was delivered by the British and French along the whole front at Helles. In this action the 29th Division, the 42nd Division, the 2nd Naval Brigade and both French Divisions took part. The Allied forces numbered about 34,000 infantry and the Turks 25,000. Despite a woeful deficiency in artillery and ammunition, the British troops stormed the trenches of the Turkish centre. The French gained ground on the right; but were afterwards driven back by counter-attacks. This exposed the flank of the Naval and 42nd Divisions who were in succession compelled to yield up the greater part of their gains. In the end the general line of the Allies was advanced by no more than two or three hundred yards. The battle was costly for both sides. The Turkish losses amounted to 10,000, and those of the British alone to an equal number. As in all the battles on the Peninsula, the issue hung in a trembling balance. The Turks were thrown into such confusion that on only two kilometres of their front no less than twenty-five battalions (or parts of battalions) were mingled in the line without any higher organization. In these straits the Turkish Divisional Commander reported that no further British attack could be resisted. In a heated conference the Turkish Chief-of-the-Staff advised the withdrawal of the whole front to Achi Baba. It was only with the greatest difficulty and by the enemy's good luck that the intermingled troops were relieved by a fresh Turkish division on the night of June 7.

On June 21 another important action was fought by the French

Corps, which attacked with great spirit on the right of the Helles Front, captured the Haricot Redoubt and made a substantial advance. A portion of these gains were wrested from them the next day by a Turkish counter-attack.

A week later, June 28, the British being reinforced by the 52nd Division, made a general attack on the left of the Helles Front. Five lines of trenches were captured, and an advance of about 1,000 yards was secured. The Turkish force engaged comprised 38,000 infantry with 16 field and 7 heavy batteries. The fire of the ships was, on this occasion, found to be most effective, and the success of the attack again led to critical discussions at the Turkish Headquarters. The German General, Weber, now commanding the Southern zone, wished to withdraw the whole front to the Kilid Bahr Plateau. Liman von Sanders, however, over-ruled him and demanded instead a speedy counter-attack. For this purpose, two fresh Turkish divisions were brought into the line, and a fierce surprise assault was delivered before dawn on July 5. The Turks were repulsed with a loss of 6,000 men.

'The affair of the 28th,' said General Callwell in his cool and instructed account of the Campaign,<sup>1</sup> 'following closely Gouraud's stroke on the opposite flank seemed to suggest that if there had been a plentiful reserve to throw into the scale at this juncture on the Helles front, this might have proved the psychological moment for initiating a determined effort to secure Krithia, the high ground beyond that coveted village, and even possibly Achi Baba itself; no such reserves were, however, available.' The paralysis of the British Executive during the formation of the Coalition Government and the education of its new ministers had effectually withheld this boon.

A third attack along the whole front was delivered with such ammunition and troops as could be found on July 12-13. The general line was advanced from 200 to 400 yards, but no important results were obtained. It had been evident from the beginning of July that considerable reinforcements were reaching the Turks. On the other hand, the British Army was woefully reduced by wastage and casualties. Already by the middle of May, after the first battles, the infantry of Sir Ian Hamilton's five divisions were 23,000 men, or 40 per cent. below their war establishment. These deficiencies were never overtaken by the drafts supplied by the War Office. The 52nd Division and various minor reinforcements dribbled in during June, but did little more than keep pace with the wastage. While the new divisions were on the sea, the old divisions were dwindling. During the whole of May, June and July, the total of the British Forces on the Peninsula and at Anzac never exceeded 60,000 men.

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell: *The Dardanelles*, p. 160.

Even more discouraging than depleted battalions was the scarcity of ammunition. 'During the months of June and July,' said Gen. Simpson-Baikie—who commanded the British Artillery—'the total number of rounds of 18-pdr. ammunition at Cape Helles never reached 25,000. Before one of our attacks it used to reach its maximum which was about 19,000 to 23,000. The total amount of 18 pdr. therefore was limited to about 12,000 rounds, as it was necessary to keep 6,000 to 10,000 rounds in reserve to guard against Turkish counter-attacks. As there was no high explosive shell for the 18-pdr. (except 640 rounds expended on June 4) only shrapnel could be used, and it is well known that shrapnel is but little use for destroying hostile trenches.' On July 13 only 5,000 rounds for the field artillery remained at Helles, and all active operations had, perforce, to be suspended.

The weight of field-gun ammunition available to prepare and support the British assaults in any of these battles on the Peninsula never exceeded 150 tons. For the purpose of judging the scale of the artillery preparation, this may be compared with over 1,300 tons fired in the first two days of the battle of Loos at the end of September in the same year; and with upwards of 25,000 tons often fired in two days during the August offensive of 1918. The rifle and machine-gun fire of the defence on each occasion remained a constant factor. Hard tasks were therefore set to the troops in Gallipoli, and the fact that the issue hung continually in the balance is the measure of their bravery and devotion.<sup>2</sup>

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The fact that during all this period the British Fleet neither attacked nor threatened the forts at the Narrows nor attempted to sweep the minefields enabled the German and Turkish Commanders to draw upon the medium and mobile artillery which

<sup>1</sup> *Gallipoli Diary*, Appendix I, 281; Statement of Major-General Simpson-Baikie.

<sup>2</sup> The whole story of the artillery at Helles may be summed up in the following sentences: insufficiency of guns of every nature; insufficiency of ammunition of every nature, especially of H.E.; insufficient provision made by the Home Authorities for spare guns, spare carriages, spare parts, adequate repairing workshops, or for a regular daily, weekly, or monthly supply of ammunition; guns provided often of an obsolete pattern and so badly worn by previous use as to be most inaccurate; lack of aeroplanes trained observers and of all the requisites for air observation; total failure to produce the trench mortars and bombs to which the closeness of the opposing lines at Helles would have lent themselves well—in short, total lack of organization at home to provide even the most rudimentary and indispensable artillery requisites for daily consumption; not to speak of downright carelessness which resulted in wrong shells being sent to the wrong guns, and new types of fuses being sent without fuse keys and new types of howitzer shells without range tables. These serious faults provoked their own penalties in the shape of the heavy losses suffered by our infantry and artillery, which might have been to a great measure averted if sufficient forethought and attention had been devoted to the 'side-show' at the Dardanelles. *Ibid.*, p 287.

defended the Straits for the purpose of succouring the Fifth Turkish Army in its desperate struggle. The first transferences began on April 27. On May 23 Admiral von Usedom, who on April 26 had assumed command of the Fortress of the Dardanelles and of all the Marine Defences of the Straits, reported to the Emperor that he had up to that date, under protest, already yielded to the Army the following artillery:—

Six 8·2-inch mortars, eight 6-inch field howitzers, two 4·7-inch quick-firing field howitzers, nine 4·7-inch field howitzers, twelve 4·7-inch siege guns, and twelve field guns. In all forty-nine pieces.

These transferences took place gradually during the month.

During June and July the Fifth Turkish Army in its distress made ever-increasing inroads upon the artillery defence of the Straits. Writing to the Emperor on July 20, Admiral von Usedom again revealed his anxiety at the denudation of the marine artillery.

'The struggle of the Fifth Army against the forces landed by the enemy entails great sacrifices and has so far resulted in no advantage to the defence. In my judgment there is no prospect of driving the enemy into the sea. In fact I believe it is only possible merely to hold him to the ground which he has already won if large supplies of ammunition and reinforcements of men are provided. As I mentioned in my telegram, the Minister of War has decided against my advice that the Army should be handed over all the fortress guns and munitions which it demands. A systematic preparation of second-line defences in case the Army should not be able to hold its ground was set aside as out of the question. What the fortress has already provided in munitions and guns the attached list shows.<sup>1</sup> I forward also with all respect a copy of my appreciation of the situation addressed to the Minister of War, and of the orders issued by me.

<sup>1</sup> This list shows that from the beginning of the fighting in Gallipoli to July 20 the following howitzers, guns and ammunition had been diverted from the Dardanelles defences to the Fifth Turkish Army:—

No of Guns	Calibre	Ammunition
14	8·2 inch Howitzers (Mortars)	548 rounds.
8	6 " Field Howitzers Patt. 93	2,118 "
3	6 " Q F Howitzers	2,024 "
2	4·7 " Q F. Howitzers	260 " (about).
6	4·7 " Field Howitzers	1,178 "

Besides these 33 howitzers which were a vital factor in the defences of the Narrows, 50 smaller guns and 12,000 shells were collected from the German and Turkish warships, from Constantinople, and from the Fortress transferred to the Army.

'Your Imperial and Royal Majesty will see from this that it was my endeavour to maintain the system of fortifications of the Straits at such a strength that it would again be self-sufficing in case of any weakening of resistance on land. Since the verdict has gone against my view I have ceded batteries to the Army, thus weakening the naval defences. The aircraft have also been removed from the sea defences. But in this case there is a partial substitute in the recently arrived German naval hydroplanes.'

And again:—

'How long the Fifth Army can hold the enemy is more than I can prophesy. If no ammunition comes through from Germany, it can only be a question of a short time. This is shown by the numerous proposals for support and relief, together with the study of their establishments and their casualties. The fortress system itself has suffered from the transfers which I have reported, and for it also the speedy arrival of German ammunition is a matter of life and death. The opinion of Turkish General Headquarters appears to me to incline to a hazardous optimism. It is certainly not clearly realized there what is involved for the supreme command of the Central Powers here in the Dardanelles if the means of war at present available are found to be insufficient. Everything must be done by Turkey, even at risk of sacrifice to herself, to get German ammunition through the Balkan countries and by that means stabilize the battle.'

These efforts met with no success and on August 16 Admiral von Usedom reported to the Emperor that 'the attempts of bringing ammunition ordered in Germany through Roumania have all failed.' He was therefore forced to endure his precarious situation month after month. It must, however, be observed that whereas the Turkish shortage of ammunition arose from causes beyond their control, the British shortage sprang solely from lack of decision in the distribution of the available quantities between the various theatres of war.

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The measures taken to cope with the German submarine attack upon our communications followed in the main the lines which have been indicated and proved, broadly speaking, completely successful. The Fleet was kept in the shelter of Mudros harbour; battleships were only exposed when required for some definite operation, and the ordinary support of the Army by fire from the sea was afforded during June by destroyers and light vessels.

This was found to be sufficient. The observation and direction of the ships' fire attained every week a higher efficiency. This process continued steadily until naval co-operation in land fighting on Gallipoli had become a factor of the utmost value. In July the monitors and 'bulged' cruisers began to arrive. Thenceforward the fire of the Turkish guns from Asia was controlled and largely quelled. The four large monitors armed with 14-inch guns, four medium monitors armed with 9·2 or 6-inch guns, and four 'bulged' cruisers (*Theseus*, *Endymion*, *Grafton* and *Edgar*) were all on the scene by the end of that month. Had action been taken when it was first proposed to Lord Fisher, the arrival of these vessels would have been antedated by more than three weeks. But the interval was passed without serious disadvantage to the Army: and when the whole Monitor Fleet had arrived, the Naval support of the troops was not only fully restored, but much enhanced.

Meanwhile the supply of the Army was maintained by the use of large numbers of small shallow-draft vessels and proceeded uninterruptedly, so that by the middle of July reserves of twenty-four days' rations had been accumulated for all troops ashore at Helles and Anzac. The reinforcements sent from home were conveyed to their destination, although several transports were torpedoed, and in one case a thousand lives were lost. It is remarkable that neither monitors, 'bulged' cruisers, nor shallow-draught vessels were ever seriously attacked or threatened by submarines. Lastly, the great netted areas proved an effective deterrent against submarine attack. Although warships of every kind were continually moving about within them, they were in no case molested during the whole of the campaign. Thus, what had seemed to be a danger potentially mortal was entirely warded off by suitable measures perseveringly applied on a sufficient scale.

While the submarine attack upon the British sea communications was being frustrated, a far more effective pressure was being brought to bear upon the enemy. In December, 1914, Lieutenant-Commander Norman Holbrook had gained the Victoria Cross by diving his submarine B 11 under the minefields of the Dardanelles and sinking the Turkish cruiser *Messudieh*. On April 17 this desperate enterprise had been again attempted by submarine E 15 in conjunction with Sir Ian Hamilton's impending landing. The effort failed. The vessel ran aground in the Straits near Dardanos; her Captain, Lieutenant Commander T. S. Brodie, was killed; most of her crew were captured and her carcass, after being fiercely contended for, was finally shattered by a torpedo from a British picket boat. On April 25, while the landing was in progress, the Australian submarine AE 2, undeterred by the

fate of her forerunner, most gallantly and skilfully dived through and under the minefields and succeeded in entering the Sea of Marmora. Here from the 25th to the 30th she attacked the Turkish shipping and sank a large gunboat. On April 30, however, being damaged and unable to dive properly, she was herself sunk, after a two hours' fight, by a Turkish torpedo boat, but the way had been re-opened. The passage, whatever its perils, was shown to be still not impossible. The losses of these two boats, which so greatly disturbed Lord Fisher, did not prevent a sublime perseverance. On April 27, E 14 under Lieutenant Commander C. Boyle dived at 95 feet through the minefield, passed Kilid Bahr at 22 feet under the fire of all the forts and torpedoed a Turkish gunboat near Gallipoli. From this time forward, till the end, one or more British submarines continuously operated in the Sea of Marmora, and their attacks upon the Turkish water communications, almost by themselves, achieved the ruin of the enemy.

E 14 remained in the Sea of Marmora from April 27 to May 18, continually hunted by torpedo boats and other patrol craft, and fired on so constantly that she could scarcely find breathing space to re-charge her batteries and keep herself alive. Nevertheless she wrought decisive havoc on the Turkish transports. On the 29th she attacked two and sank one. On May 1 she sank a gunboat. On May 5 she attacked another transport and drove others back to Constantinople. On the 10th she attacked two transports convoyed by two Turkish destroyers, and fired at both. The second transport was a very large vessel, full of troops; a terrific explosion followed the impact of the torpedo, and the transport sank rapidly. An entire infantry brigade and several batteries of artillery, in all upwards of 6,000 Turkish soldiers, were drowned. This awful event practically arrested the movement of Turkish troops by sea. E 14 had now no torpedoes, and on May 17 she received wireless orders to return. On the 18th she again ran the gauntlet of the Forts at 22 feet, and dived, as she thought, under the minefields. She must, however, have passed right through the lines of mines in extreme danger.

Commander Nasmith in E 11 entered the Marmora on the following day. His vessel was newly equipped with a 6-pounder gun, and cruised for some days lashed alongside a sailing vessel, sinking a gunboat and several ships. On May 25 Commander Nasmith dived E 11 literally into Constantinople, and hit with a torpedo a large vessel alongside the arsenal. E 11 grounded several times and escaped with great difficulty from the enemy's harbour. She now established a reign of terror in the Marmora, attacking unsuccessfully the battleship *Barbarossa*, fighting with destroyers,

sinking store-ships and steamers, with continued hair-breadth escapes from destruction. On June 7 she returned through the minefield, actually fouling a mine which she carried on her port hydroplane for a considerable distance while under heavy fire from the Forts. She had been in the Marmora for nineteen days, and had sunk 1 gunboat, 3 transports, 1 ammunition ship and 3 storeships.

On June 10 Commander Boyle made his second entry into the Marmora where he remained for twenty-three days, sinking 1 large steamer and 13 sailing vessels. E 12 (Lieutenant Commander Bruce) and E 7 (Lieutenant Commander Cochrane) passed the Straits on the 20th and 30th June respectively, destroyed between them 7 steamers and 19 sailing vessels, and fired repeatedly on the roads and railways along the coast.

A new peril was now to be added to the passage. In the middle of July the Turks completed the Nagara anti-submarine net. This net was made in 10-foot meshes of 3-inch, strengthened with 5-inch wire, and except for a small gateway completely closed the passage to a depth of over 220 feet. This barrier was guarded by five motor-gunboats armed with depth charges, and by numerous guns specially placed.

On July 21 Commander Boyle, for the third time, made the passage of the Straits in E 14. A mine scraped past her near the Narrows without exploding, and by good luck she passed through the gate of the net at Nagara. On July 22 she met E 7 in the Marmora, and both vessels together continued their depredations upon shipping. All hospital ships were spared, although their increase in numbers showed that they were being used for military transport. Commander Boyle's final return on August 12, i.e., his sixth passage of the minefield, was thus described by him:—

'I missed the gate and hit the net. It is possible the net now extends nearly the whole way across. I was brought up from 80 feet to 45 feet in three seconds, but luckily only thrown 15 degrees off my course. There was a tremendous noise, scraping, banging, tearing and rumbling, and it sounded as if there were two distinct obstructions, as the noise nearly ceased and then came on again, and we were appreciably checked twice. It took about 20 seconds to get through. I was fired at on rounding Kilid Bahr, and a torpedo was fired at me from Chanak, breaking surface a few yards astern of me. A mile south-west of Chanak I scraped passed a mine, but it did not check me—after I got out I found some twin electric wire round my propellers . . . and various parts of the boat were scraped and scored by wire.'

On August 5, E 11 (Commander Nasmith) had made her second



passage of the Straits. A mine bumped heavily along her side off Kephez point at a depth of 70 feet. To break the net at Nagara she dived to 110 feet and then charged. The net caught her bow and she was drawn violently upwards. Under the strain the wires of the net snapped with a crack, and the submarine was freed. An hour later she torpedoed a transport; all day she was harassed by patrol craft, at dawn the next morning she was attacked by the bombs of an aeroplane. Later in the day she torpedoed a gunboat. On the 7th she was in action with troops on the roads along the coast. On the 8th she torpedoed and sank the battleship *Barbarossa*, which, escorted by two destroyers was hurrying to the Peninsula during the Battle of Suvla Bay. These adventures and exploits continued without cessation during twenty-nine days, at the end of which E 11 returned safely, having sunk or destroyed 1 battleship, 1 gunboat, 6 transports, 1 steamer and 23 sailing vessels.

The perilous duty was taken up successively by E 2, E 7, E 12, H 1 (Lieutenant Pirie) and E 20 (Lieutenant-Commander Glyfford Warren), as well as by the French submarine *Turquoise*. In all, the passage of Nagara was made twenty-seven times. Every one of these voyages is an epic in itself. Out of thirteen British and French submarines which made or attempted the passage into the Marmora, eight perished—four with all or nearly all hands. Besides E 15 and AE 11, whose fates have been described, Cochrane's E 7 was caught in the Nagara net on September 4. Bombed with depth charges for 16 hours, and having tried to fall through the bottom of the net by sinking to the excessive depth of 40 fathoms, Cochrane at last rose to the surface and finding himself inextricably enmeshed, ordered his crew to jump overboard, and sank his vessel with his own hands. His subsequent escapes from the Turks and adventures in captivity, are an amazing tale of courage and pertinacity. Of the French submarines three were destroyed or captured at the entrance or in the net: *Saphir* in January; *Joule* in May; and *Mariotte* on July 26. The *Turquoise* was the only French submarine which achieved the passage, and she was disabled and captured after a brief career in the Marmora on October 30. In the Captain's cabin of the *Turquoise* the enemy found his notebook, which he had forgotten to destroy. This notebook contained the rendezvous at which the *Turquoise* was to meet the British submarine E 20 on November 6. The German submarine U 14 was repairing at Constantinople. She kept the rendezvous, and E 20, expecting a friend, was blown to pieces by the torpedo of a foe.<sup>1</sup>

In all, the British submarines destroyed in the Marmora

<sup>1</sup> *U-boote gegen U-boote*, by Lieutenant zur See von Helmburg (*Die Woche*, March 10, 1917).

1 battleship, 1 destroyer, 5 gunboats, 11 transports, 44 steamers and 148 sailing vessels. The effect of the virtual stoppage of the Turkish sea communication was most serious to the enemy; and towards the end of June the Turkish army was reduced to the narrowest margin of food and ammunition. It was only by great exertions and in the nick of time that the land route was organized sufficiently to bear the strain. Henceforward the whole supply of the Peninsula was dependent upon 100 miles of bullock transport over a single road, itself vulnerable from the sea.

The Naval History of Britain contains no page more wonderful than that which records the prowess of her submarines at the Dardanelles. Their exploits constitute in daring, in skill, in endurance, in risk, the finest examples of submarine action in the whole of the Great War, and were, moreover, marked by a strict observance of the recognized rules of warfare. When one thinks of these officers and men, penned together amid the intricate machinery which crammed their steel, cigar-shaped vessels; groping, butting, charging far below the surface at unmeasured, unknown obstructions; surrounded by explosive engines, any one of which might destroy them at a touch; the target of guns and torpedoes if they rose for an instant to the light of day; harried by depth charges, hunted by gunboats and destroyers, stalked by the German U-boat; expecting every moment to be shattered, stifled, or hopelessly starved at the bottom of the sea; and yet in spite of all, enduring cheerfully such ordeals for weeks at a time; returning unflinchingly again and again through the Jaws of Death—it is bitter indeed to remember that their prowess and devotion were uncrowned by victory.

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In the middle of July I prepared and printed the following general appreciation, and ventured upon a forecast of the action of Germany and Bulgaria which, alas, proved only too true. After paragraphs reciting events with which the reader is already familiar, this memorandum proceeded:

‘Until the decision of June 8 had been satisfactorily taken and ratified by the Cabinet on June 9, I did not dare to raise the question of further reinforcements, though they were obviously necessary, but on June 12 I wrote to the Secretary of State urging that the two first-line Territorial Divisions which still remained in England should be sent to the Eastern Mediterranean. After repeated discussions at the Cabinet and at the War Councils, this was eventually settled on July 6, and Sir Ian Hamilton was definitely informed. It is now perfectly obvious that both these Divisions will be required, but the

Cabinet, in assenting to the despatch of the second of the two, stipulated that it should be kept at Alexandria, and, as I understand it, the Commander-in-Chief has not yet been given full liberty to use this Division as he may think best.

'While this long delay in the despatch of troops available all the time has been taking place, the enemy has not been idle, and the situation has been continually modifying itself to our disadvantage. The Turks have been able to bring up in succession one Division after another from different parts of their Empire, and to raise new levies of men. Although this process has been powerfully counteracted by the vigorous action of our army, continually harassing and wearing out the enemy, he has now been able to bring up reserves, of a strength we cannot accurately measure, which would not have been available a month ago.

'... There was no military reason why the original attack of April 25 should not have been delivered before the end of March with all the troops that were employed on the latter date and the addition of several other Divisions sent subsequent to that date. In this case a complete victory might have been won.

'Secondly, there was no military reason that the attack which is now impending should not have been delivered at the end of June or the beginning of July. The only reason for the delay is that the governing instrument here has been unable to make up its mind except by very lengthy processes of argument and exhaustion, and that the divisions of opinion to be overcome, and the number of persons of consequence to be convinced, caused delays and compromises. We have always sent two-thirds of what was necessary a month too late.

'We are now on the eve of a most critical battle in the Gallipoli Peninsula. If we are successful, results of the greatest magnitude will follow, and the fall of Constantinople will dominate the whole character of the great war and throw all other events into the shade. If we fail to obtain a decision and only make some progress, but not enough, then some of the gravest and most painful problems will arise. The precious time that has been lost can never be retrieved. The German is drawing nearer from the north, the windy weather is coming on, Roumania may succumb to German pressure and release munitions to Turkey, Serbia may be smitten down and pierced, and Bulgaria (now almost within our reach) may realize that her aspirations can only be satisfied at German hands. Although we have all along had resources available which would have placed the issue of this battle beyond doubt, it can now only be regarded as one of the great hazards of war. The

chances are not unfavourable, but where we might have had a certainty we now have a hazard. We are leaving to the exertions of the British troops a problem which a few clear decisions of the Government, taken even since the formation of the Coalition, could have rendered infinitely less hard and costly.'

After reviewing the misfortunes which had attended our undecided diplomacy in the Balkans, due largely to the interplay of the hesitations of two and latterly three other great Powers, the memorandum continued:—

'Opportunity after opportunity, military and diplomatic, has been lost in the South-East of Europe. Risks have been run in the name of prudence before which hardihood itself would pale; yet so good are the cards, moral, military, and political, that we hold and have held through the war in this theatre, if only we choose to play them, that one great opportunity still remains. It is the last.

'Time is very short, but we still have time and power to retrieve all previous mistakes.

'1. We ought now, without delay, to make all preparations to send the Third Army<sup>1</sup> to Turkey as soon as possible. All transport arrangements ought to be made for that purpose, preparations being begun now. If the battle goes in our favour we need not send them. Whether these troops, if sent, should be used on the Gallipoli Peninsula, on the Asiatic side, or in Thrace is a purely military question, which cannot, and need not, be settled until the result of the next battle is seen. We should then have at least 18 Divisions available for the capture of Constantinople.

'2. We must get Bulgaria now. Bulgaria is strong, her army is ready, her people are wounded by the Russian defeats, her territorial claims are rightful and harmonize perfectly with the principle of nationality, which ought to guide us. The oppression of the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia by the Serbians is in itself a great wrong. The taking of Kavalla from Bulgaria by Greece after the second Balkan war was, as was recognized at the time, a most impolitic act. There is nothing in Bulgarian claims as now put forward which is not reasonable and honourable.'

I proceeded to discuss the reactions which such a policy would produce in Serbia and in Greece, but this is scarcely suitable for publication. The memorandum concluded:—

'The accession of Bulgaria would, of course, carry with it

<sup>1</sup> i.e., The Third New Army of 6 Divisions.

that of Roumania, and the union of all the Christian States of the Balkans against their natural enemies, Turkey and Austria, will be complete.

'In order to gain this supreme advantage, the risk must be run that, having offered everything to Bulgaria, she will not move. In this case, as we are frequently warned, we shall have offended Serbia and Greece without gaining any compensating advantage. But, after all, we have offended them already by the offers made; once those offers are definitely rejected by Bulgaria the substantive cause of offence dies, and if other circumstances did not intervene we could, after an interval, address ourselves again to Greece.

'But other circumstances will intervene in the Balkans unless we can gain Bulgaria to our cause or attack Constantinople before the end of September without her, and these other circumstances may be fatal to the issue of the war and disastrous in a peculiar degree to Great Britain.

'To appreciate these circumstances, it is necessary to look at the main military situation from the German point of view. I do not believe in the immediate resumption of a great German offensive in the west. As stated by me in writing on February 25, in reply to alarmist reports, and again in my memoranda circulated to the Cabinet on June 1 and 18, there is no likelihood of the Germans being able to transfer from the eastern to the western theatre during the next two months from 500,000 to 1,000,000 men for an offensive in the west, and even if they did so, it is the thing we ought to welcome most. During the last few weeks we have had repeated statements that a great offensive is going to begin in the western theatre, and, as on three or four previous occasions, when the same wrong arguments have been used with the same potent effect, nothing has followed. The Germans habitually spread false reports, and we are habitually deceived by them. As far back as February, the 29th Division was stopped sailing for three weeks for fear of a renewed German offensive in the west following on a Russian collapse. In the present case the announcement made in all the German newspapers that the foreign attachés had left for the western front was a blind of the most obvious kind. It is undoubtedly in the German's power, by the calculated indiscretions of officers and agents, to colour and confuse the whole of the intelligence information we receive through many sources.

'In these circumstances it is the safest guide to consider what is the enemy's true interest. It is clear that his first interest is to press his advantage against Russia to the full to some point where the military situation of that country is definitely and fundamentally altered. How far he means to go against Russia

we cannot measure, but that he should relax his pressure upon her in time to enable him to bring back his troops and begin a great offensive in the west within the next two months is impossible, and even in the next three months almost impossible. It is probable that he will not have done what he intends to do to Russia for at least two months,<sup>1</sup> and if fortune turns in favour of the Russians he may be entangled there for a much longer period.

But, on the assumption that in six weeks or two months from now 20 or 30 Divisions of German troops can be withdrawn from the Russian front, where would Germany be wise to send them? She might send them to Holland in case that country should turn against her later at an unfavourable moment. She might send them to Italy, where there are rich provinces to be conquered and to be held as security for a satisfactory peace. But, far more attractive to her and dangerous to us than all of these, she might break through Serbia, seduce Bulgaria, establish a through route to Constantinople, gain full control of the Turkish Empire with power to organize it for war on the Prussian model, and open to herself avenues to Persia and India. We must not suppose that Germany, encouraged by victory, will stop short on the path of conquest, or that the Napoleonic dreams of Eastern domination as an offset to England's colonial gains have no place in the minds of her military leaders. In these regions immense and easy prizes await the sword of the conqueror, and comparatively small armies could achieve the reduction of enormous territories. It is noteworthy in this connection that in spite of all pressure of this war upon Germany the construction of the Bagdad Railway has been hurried forward with German material at the greatest speed. The one thing it would not pay the Germans to do is to break themselves in sterile efforts to pierce the lines in France. Here they would encounter very numerous, well disciplined, and well supplied armies, far stronger proportionately than those they fought at the outset of the war, and here they have already pegged out for themselves a very large conquered area comprising the whole of Belgium and Antwerp and some of the best departments of France. Is it not their game to stand on what they have won and leave us, if we are foolish enough, to break our strength in trying to turn them out, while they gain further territories easily elsewhere?

These conclusions were soon to be sustained by the march of events.

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<sup>1</sup> Although I believed these periods would be much longer, I did not attempt to forecast beyond the three months which were under discussion.

At the end of the first week in July, Lord Kitchener resolved to add the 53rd and 54th Territorial Divisions to the reinforcements that were going to the Dardanelles, and I took occasion to write a letter to Sir Ian Hamilton more encouraging in tone than my Cabinet memoranda.

*Mr. Churchill to Sir Ian Hamilton.*

I rejoice to say that on Monday (after 3 weeks' work) the War Council definitely decided to add two Territorial divisions to your army, making in all six divisions not yet engaged. I rejoice also at the punishment you are inflicting on the Turks, at the evident distress of their army and their capital, and at the progress made in gaining ground. My confidence in the future and in the wisdom of the policy which has launched this operation remains unshaken. Well done and with good luck, or mistakenly done and with bad luck, if done in the end, it will repay all losses and cover all miscalculations in the priceless advantages it will win for the Allied cause.

It has been a remarkable experience to me watching opinion slowly and steadily consolidating behind this enterprise, and to see the successive waves of opposition surmounted one after another. Ignorance, pessimism in high places, the malice of newspapers, the natural jealousies and carping of the Flanders army and of the French soldiers, have all failed to prevent the necessary reinforcements by land and sea from being sent. And now [that] you are equipped with all that you have asked for, and more, the next great effort can be made.

I never look beyond a battle. It is a culminating event, and like a brick-wall bars all further vision. But the chances seem favourable, and the reward of success will be astonishing.

Your daring spirit and the high qualities of your nature will enable you to enjoy trials and tests under which the fleshly average of commonplace commanders would quail. The superb conduct and achievements of the soldiers would redeem even a final failure; but with a final success they will become a military episode not inferior in glory to any that the history of war records. Then there will be proud honour for all who have never flinched and never wavered. God go with you.

I did not understand how far the actual performances of the War Office were to lag behind their paper programmes. The actual facts were far less satisfactory than I knew.

There is no principle of war better established than that everything should be massed for the battle. The lessons of military history, the practice of great commanders, the doctrines of the text-books, have in every age enjoined this rule. We see

Napoleon before his battles grasping for every man he can reach, neglecting no resource however small, cheerfully accepting risks at other points, content with nothing less than the absolute maximum which human power can command.

This high prudence cannot be discerned in Lord Kitchener's preparations at this time. He did not decide to add the 53rd and 54th Divisions to the reinforcements that were going to the Dardanelles until it was impossible for the second of them to arrive before the battle had begun, thus having to go direct into action from a three weeks' voyage. The position of the troops in Egypt continued until the last moment undetermined. Including the Dardanelles details nearly 75,000 men were accumulated in Alexandria, Cairo and along the Canal. As long as we were threatening Constantinople there could be no danger of a serious Turkish invasion of Egypt. It should have been possible to organize from General Maxwell's troops at least 30,000 additional rifles as a reserve which could be thrown into the Gallipoli operations at the decisive moment and for a limited period. If General Maxwell had been ordered to organize such a force, and if Sir Ian Hamilton had been told that he could count it among the troops available for the battle, it would have been woven into the plans which were being prepared and would have sensibly improved the prospects. Lord Kitchener's treatment of the question was, however, most baffling. His telegraphic correspondence with Sir Ian Hamilton, which has been published, shows him at one moment counting large numbers of troops in Egypt as available if necessary for the Dardanelles, and at another chiding Sir Ian for attempting to draw on them. In consequence the British garrison of Egypt played no part in Sir Ian Hamilton's calculations and plans, and was only thrown in, like so much else, too late.

When on the eve of the battle, July 29, Lord Kitchener telegraphed to Sir Ian Hamilton informing him that he had 'a total of about 205,000 men for the forthcoming operation,' the General replied: 'The grand total you mention does not take into account non-effectives or casualties; it includes reinforcements such as the 54th and part of the 53rd Divisions, etc., which cannot be here in time for my operation, and it also includes Yeomanry and Indian troops which, until this morning, I was unaware were at my unreserved disposal. For the coming operation the number of rifles available is about half the figure you quote, viz., 120,000.' This figure was not effectively disputed by the War Office. Lord Kitchener had specifically included in his total of 205,000, 8,500 Yeomanry and 11,500 Indian troops and artillery stationed in Egypt. But when Sir Ian Hamilton attempted to draw on these, Lord Kitchener telegraphed:—



'Maxwell wires that you are taking 300 officers and 5,000 men of his mounted troops. I do not quite understand why you require Egyptian Garrison troops while you have the 53rd Division at Alexandria, and the 54th, the last six battalions of which are arriving in five or six days, on the *Aquitania*.

'When I placed the Egyptian Garrison at your disposal to reinforce at the Dardanelles in case of necessity, Maxwell pointed out that Egypt would be left very short, and I replied that you would only require them in case of emergency for a short time, and that the risk must be run. I did not contemplate, however, that you would take troops from the Egyptian Garrison until those sent specially for you were exhausted. How long will you require Maxwell's troops, and where do you intend to send them? 'They should only be removed from Egypt for actual operations and for the shortest possible time.'

I was not able to discover the shortage of drafts, nor was I aware of the ambiguous conditions under which the garrison of Egypt was available as a reserve. But a young Staff Officer from the Dardanelles, who reached London in July, disclosed to me the shortage of ammunition and suggested that consignments sent by rail to Marseilles instead of by sea might still reach the Army in time for the battle. I therefore urged Lord Kitchener to send the whole of the latest weekly outputs by this route. Usually most kind and patient with my importunity, he took this request very much amiss. I declared I would demand a Cabinet decision, and we parted abruptly. I spent the afternoon and evening marshalling opinion, and informed the Prime Minister of my intention to raise the issue. However, when the decks were cleared for action and I was invited to state my case, Lord Kitchener ended the matter by stating that he had now found it possible to issue the necessary orders. Three train-loads of high explosive shell went accordingly.

Upon such preludes the event was now to supervene.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE BATTLE OF SUVLA BAY

The Threefold Plan—The Forces Available—The Helles Attack—Lone Pine—The Sortie from Anzac—The Landing at Suvla—The First Twenty-four Hours at Suvla—At Liman von Sanders's Headquarters—The Turkish Divisions from Bulair—An Anxious Interval—The Anzac Advance Resumed—The Struggle for the Crest Line—A Fatal Mischance—Sir Frederick Stopford at Suvla Bay—The Second Twenty-four Hours—Colonel Aspinall's Account—Arrival of the Commander-in-Chief—His Personal Intervention—Consequences—The Attacks on the 9th and 10th at Suvla—Mustapha Kemal's Counter-stroke at Anzac—Actions of the 15th and 21st—The True Causes of Failure.

THE long and varied annals of the British Army contain no more heart-breaking episode than the Battle of Suvla Bay. The greatness of the prize in view, the narrowness by which it was missed, the extremes of valiant skill and of incompetence, of effort and inertia, which were equally presented, the malevolent fortune which played about the field, are features not easily to be matched in our history. The tale has been often told, and no more than a general survey can here be attempted.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Ian Hamilton's plan had for its supreme object the capture of Hill 971 (Koja Chemen Tepe), the dominating point of the Sari Bair Ridge, and working from there, to grip the neck of the Peninsula from Gaba Tepe to Maidos. This conception was elaborated as follows:—

(1) To break out with a rush from Anzac and cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from land communication with Constantinople.

(2) To gain artillery positions which would cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from sea traffic whether with Constantinople or with Asia.

(3) To secure Suvla Bay as a winter base for Anzac and all the troops operating in that neighbourhood.

For this purpose three separate attacks were prepared in extreme detail by the Army Staff during the month of July: first, a holding attack by two of the six divisions at Helles to prevent the Turks from removing any troops from this sector of the front; secondly, a great attack from Anzac on the main and dominating ridge of Sari Bair by the two Australasian

<sup>1</sup> See Map on page 86z.

divisions, reinforced by the 13th New Army Division and one British and one Indian brigade; and thirdly, a landing by two divisions (the 10th and 11th) forming the IXth Corps at Suvla Bay to secure the Anafarta Ridge and join their right hands to the Anzac attack and help it as it progressed.

The Helles sector was held by 35,000 men under General Davies. To the Anzac attack were assigned 37,000 under General Birdwood; and to the Suvla attack, 25,000 under General Stopford; the whole aggregating, with a reserve on the islands or approaching on the sea of 20,000 to 25,000, about 120,000 fighting men.

The Turks believed that the British had received reinforcements amounting perhaps to 100,000 men, and they expected a general attack, together with a landing, early in August. They realized that the Sari Bair Ridge was the key to the Narrows; they were apprehensive of landings near Kum Tepe or near Bulair, and in addition they had to guard the Asiatic shore. They knew that Suvla and Ejelmer Bays were possible landing-places, but they did not regard landings there as sufficiently probable to warrant further dissipation of their strength. On the evening of August 6 their dispositions were as follows: at Helles, 40,000 rifles with 94 guns; opposite Anzac and between Anzac and Helles, 30,000 rifles, supported by 76 guns; at Bulair, 20,000 rifles and 80 guns; on the Asiatic coast, 20,000 rifles with about 60 guns. In all, including detachments of troops guarding the coast at various points, the Turks had been able to marshal 20 divisions, comprising about 120,000 rifles with 330 guns, and of these 90,000 to 100,000 men and 270 guns were actually on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

The forces on both sides available for the battle are thus seen to be approximately equal. The British did not possess any of the preponderance necessary for an offensive. Once their attack was fully disclosed and battle was joined along the whole front, there was no reasonable expectation of their being able to defeat the Turkish Army. There was, however, a chance of seizing vital positions by surprise before the Turks could bring up all their forces. The situation, in fact, exactly reproduces that of April 25, but on a larger scale. Once again the advantages of sea power have been neutralized by delay and the enemy given time to gather forces equal to our own; once again a frightful and dubious ordeal has taken the place of a sound and reasonably sure operation; once again the only hope lies in the devotion of the troops and the skill of their leaders; once again all is at the mercy of time and chance.

On the afternoon of August 6 the great battle began with the attack of the Lancashire and Lowland Territorial Divisions on about 1,200 yards of the Turkish line at Helles. As it chanced, the Turks had just brought up two fresh divisions to this front. They were found in great strength, and their trench systems swarmed with men. Fierce fighting began at once and was maintained with increasing severity for a whole week. The conflict centred round a vineyard which was stormed at the outset by the British and held by them against repeated counter-attacks until the 12th, when it was recaptured by the enemy, who the next day were driven out by the British, with whom in the end it remained. It was not the only prize which had been purchased by costly valour. Of the seven Turkish divisions concentrated at the southern end of the Peninsula only one could be withdrawn to play its part in the real crisis of the battle.

Simultaneously with the British attack at Helles there began on the evening of the 6th an Australian attack on the Lone Pine Ridge to the right of the Anzac position. This attack was itself a subsidiary preliminary to the main Anzac operation. Its object was to deceive the enemy and draw him to the Anzac right, while all the time the decisive manœuvre was to proceed out on the Anzac left. Lone Pine Ridge and the fortifications surmounting it were stormed by the 1st Australian Brigade before sundown. The great beams which covered the Turkish trenches, converting them in the absence of adequate howitzer attack, into completely protected galleries, were torn asunder by main force. The Australians plunged through the apertures and slew or captured the defenders of the galleries. The Turks immediately counter-attacked with the utmost fury and in large numbers. Intense and bloody fighting continued at this point throughout the night. It was renewed on the 7th and again on a great scale on the 9th, but every hostile effort to retake Lone Pine failed, and it rested to the end in the strong hands of the 1st Australian Brigade. Other attacks akin and supplemental to the assault of Lone Pine were delivered by the Australians against various fortified points in the centre of their line, particularly upon a redoubt called the Chessboard. In spite of every sacrifice no ground was gained, and the attacking parties were in some cases almost completely destroyed.

While the roar of the cannonade at Helles and at Lone Pine resounded through the Peninsula, the great sortie from Anzac had begun. Each night for a week beforehand powerful reinforcements of troops had secretly and skilfully been crowded into Anzac Cove and lay concealed in gulleys and dugouts, until on August 6 General Birdwood's force comprised 37,000 men and 72 guns. Now in the darkness of a moonless night 16,000 men in

**ANZAC AND SUVLA BAY**

Scale of Yards  
1000 0 1000 2000 3000

— Roads & Tracks  
--- Water Courses (Dry, except in wet weather)  
Contour Figures in metres

From "Gallipoli Diary" by General Sir

From "Gallipoli Diary" by General Sir Ian Hamilton. By permission of the author and the publishers, Edward Arnold & Co.

two main columns crept out from the left of the Anzac position, toiled silently a mile along the beach, then wheeled to their right and proceeded to attack by three rugged, scrub-entangled, water-formed ravines which led up to the fateful summits of Sari Bair. The opening phase of this extraordinary enterprise involved the seizure of the fortified under-features to the left and right of the three ravines. The forces to whom these tasks had been assigned gained punctually and successfully both these strong points, and the main columns continued through the night to battle their way upward against darkness, boulders, scrub and the enemy's outposts. The hope of General Birdwood, of Sir Ian Hamilton, and of the staffs had been that dawn would see the heads of the Australian and British columns in possession of the decisive summits of Chunuk Bair and Koja Chemen Tepe. It would not have taken in daylight more than two hours to cover the distance unopposed. Six hours had been allowed under the actual conditions. But when dawn broke, the difficulties of the night and of the ground, and the stubborn and disconcerting resistance of the Turkish skirmishers, had prevented more than half the distance being covered. The troops were exhausted, and, after some vain efforts, it was determined to consolidate the position gained, to rest and reorganize the troops, and to renew the attack during the night of the 7th-8th.

Here was the cardinal fatality. Had it been possible to have leap-frogged the exhausted troops by a wave of fresh reinforcements, the whole crest of Sari Bair might well have fallen before noon into our possession. It had not been found possible to organize this in the face of the difficulties of the ground and of supplies, and meanwhile the direction and scale of the attack were now fully disclosed to the enemy.

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It is at this point that we must move on to Suvla Bay. The reader will remember the steel-plated motor-lighters which Lord Fisher had designed at the end of 1914 for the landing of troops upon hostile beaches. A number of these had now been completed and sent to the Dardanelles. They were designed to carry five hundred infantry at a time at a speed of five knots, were bullet-proof and fitted with landing-bridges at their bows. Their appearance gained them throughout the Ægean the nickname of 'Beetles.' In thirteen of these Beetles, with numerous destroyers, lighters and transports, covered by a strong squadron of the Fleet, the 11th Division, followed by the 10th, had been moving through the blackest night towards Suvla Bay. Two hours before midnight the three brigades of the 11th Division reached the shore, the 34th Brigade landing at 'A' Beach inside

Suvla Bay, the 32nd and 33rd Brigades at 'B' and 'C' Beaches south of Nibrunesi Point. In spite of the rifle fire of the Turkish outposts guarding the coast, of the grounding of some of the Beetles before they reached the shore, and the disconcerting effect from land mines which exploded near Beach 'A,' the whole three brigades disembarked successfully without much loss in two or three hours. Their immediate duty was to occupy the two small eminences, Hill 10 and Lala Baba, on each side of the dried-up Salt Lake, and to take possession of the high ground to the northwards towards Kiretch Tepe Sirt. Thereafter as a second step a combined attack was to be made by the troops at Hill 10 and Lala Baba upon Chocolate Hill. If this was successful, the advance was to be continued against the rugged, scrub-covered and intricate under-feature known as Ismail Oglu Tepe. It was contemplated by the Staff that unless strong forces of the enemy were encountered, all these positions might well be in the hands of the troops by dawn. The event, however, turned very differently.<sup>1</sup>

It was 2 a.m. before the half battalion of Turks holding Lala Baba had been driven off and the hill occupied. Meanwhile the Brigadier commanding the 34th Brigade, having landed at Beach 'A,' perceived a sand-hill near the shore which he took to be Hill 10, and was content to occupy this until dawn. It was broad daylight before Hill 10 was taken and its surviving defenders retired slowly into the scrub of the plain. Thus the morning of the 7th saw only the first part of the task of the 11th Division accomplished, and as the light grew stronger Turkish artillery from unseen positions in the hills began fitfully to shell the various Beaches and the landed troops. Darkness exercises so baffling and mysterious an effect upon the movements even of the most experienced troops that the time-table of the Staff may well be deemed too ambitious. But the performance fell far short of reasonable expectation. The British Intelligence believed that five Turkish battalions, aggregating 4,000 men with artillery, were guarding this part of the coast. In fact, however, only three battalions, two of which were gendarmerie, aggregating about 1,800 men and 20 guns, stood in the path of the 11th Division.

The 10th Division, under General Hill, now approached the shore near Lala Baba and began to disembark from dawn onwards under an occasional shell fire. By 8 a.m. thirteen battalions of the 11th Division, two mountain batteries and the covering ships were all in action, and the 10th Division was rapidly growing behind them. This force, rising as the day passed to 20,000 men, had only to advance three miles from their landing-places to brush before them what was left of the 1,800 Turks and occupy positions

<sup>1</sup> All these positions can be followed on the Map on page 861.

where water was plentiful and which were of decisive importance in this part of the field. Instead of doing this all the troops that had landed either remained idle near Lala Baba for many hours or toiled along the sandy shore around the Salt Lake, a march of five miles in the heat of the day, before attacking Chocolate Hill. Thirst and exhaustion afflicted these young soldiers, and the evening was far advanced before by a spirited attack they made themselves masters of Chocolate Hill. Night closed with the troops much wearied, with their units intermingled, their water supply in confusion, and with only their earliest objectives obtained. About a thousand casualties had been sustained, and these were almost entirely confined to three or four battalions. Thus passed the first twenty-four hours of Suvla Bay.

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On the evening of August 6 the field telephones had carried the news of the beginning of the battle to General Liman von Sanders in his headquarters at Gallipoli, almost as soon as he heard the opening of the cannonade. Heavy British and Australian attacks were beginning at Helles and at Lone Pine, while at the same time British feints in the Gulf of Xeros and opposite Mitylene were reported as actual or prospective landings. Precious as were the moments, it was impossible to take any measures before the intention of the assailants was fully disclosed. But before midnight news was received that large masses of troops were moving out from the left of the Anzac position along the coast northwards, and later, that numerous disembarkations were taking place at Suvla Bay. Two divisions in reserve at Maidos were ordered to reinforce the defenders of Sari Bair. These could certainly come into action during the next day. Suvla Bay, however, was an inevitable surprise against which it would not have been reasonable to prepare on a great scale beforehand. Who could measure the strength of the attack? A division, two divisions, an entire corps, two corps—no one could tell. But whatever might be the strength of the invaders there stood between them and the vital positions of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, the Anafarta Ridge and Ismail Oglu Tepe, only the German Major Willmer with one battalion of Gallipoli gendarmes, one of Brussa gendarmes and one of the 31st regiment with 20 guns. No help could come from the south; all was becoming locked in general battle there. Liman von Sanders, repeating his procedure of April 26, ordered the 7th and 12th Divisions to march at once from Bulair to Suvla Bay, and all the troops on the Asiatic side to cross to Gallipoli. Once again, Asia and the vital Bulair lines must be left virtually unguarded, the easy spoil of any new disembarkation. 'For the second time,' says the German Commander, 'the upper part of the Gulf of



Xeros was completely denuded of troops and on the entire Asiatic side only three battalions and a few batteries had been left behind for coast defence.' The 7th Turkish Division received orders to march at 3.40 a.m. and the 12th at 8.30 a.m. on August 7. Both divisions started from the neighbourhood of Bulair by the two roads running southward along the Peninsula. *The distance between them and Suvla Bay was more than thirty miles.*

It seemed to General von Sanders that no effective help could reach Major Willmer and his gendarmerie before the night of the 8th, and that no serious counter-attacks could be launched before the morning of the 9th. Daylight of the 7th revealed the extent of the British landings. The great Armada filled the Bay, its guns searched the hills, and swarms of troops were landing in successive waves upon the beach and gathering in the plain. Far away to the north the 7th and 12th Turkish Divisions, forming the XVIth Turkish Army Corps, had only just begun their march. However, during the afternoon Fezi Bey, the Turkish General commanding the Corps, reported to Sanders's extreme surprise, that his two divisions had reached their destinations east of Anafarta, having covered a double march in the day. On this Sanders ordered a general attack at dawn on the 8th into the Anafarta Plain. Before daybreak on the 8th he mounted his horse and rode to the deployment area of this attack. He wandered about for some time looking vainly for his troops. He found at length a Staff Officer of the 7th Turkish Division, who reported that he was looking for an outpost position, that a large part of the 7th and 12th Divisions were still far behind, and that an attack that morning was out of the question. The Commander-in-Chief therefore ordered the attack to begin at sunset. He passed the day of the 8th in great anxiety, having still nothing between him and the immense forces of the invader but the exhausted and much reduced gendarmerie. Four hundred men, the remains of the Brussa gendarmes and of the 2nd/31st battalion, were at Ismail Oglu Tepe. Three hundred men, the remains of the Gallipoli gendarmes, were on Kiretch Tepe Sirt. There were no troops between these two points. Kavak and Tekke hills and all the low intervening ground were absolutely unoccupied. In these circumstances all the Turkish guns, except one, were withdrawn behind the Anafarta Ridge to avoid what seemed to be their otherwise inevitable capture. Towards evening General von Sanders learned from Major Willmer that the XVIth Turkish Corps had not yet arrived at its area of deployment. He summoned its commander to his presence and learned from him that the exhausted condition of the troops did not permit of any attack before the morning of the 9th. In his indignation at having been mocked by false hopes, he dismissed

the General of the XVIth Corps and confided the vital fortunes of the whole of the Ottoman Empire to an officer of whom we have heard before—and since. 'That same evening,' he writes, 'I transferred the command of all the troops in the Anafarta sector to Mustapha Kemal Bey, formerly commanding the 19th Division.'

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We must now return to the Anzacs and Sari Bair. The whole of the 7th was spent by General Birdwood's troops in reorganizing, resting and preparing for renewed battle at dawn. The line of Ghurkas, British and Anzacs lay across the mountain slopes having gained about two-thirds of the distance to their summits. But those summits were now guarded by three times the defenders of the night before.

The advance from Anzac was resumed before dawn on the 8th. The right and centre columns, starting from Rhododendron Spur, assaulted Chunuk Bair. The left column starting from the head of the most northerly of the three ravines attacked Hill Q, a knoll upon the main ridge separated by a dip from Koja Chemen Tepe. This was a restriction of the original front of attack. An intense struggle now began and raged for three days without cessation. The right column of New Zealand troops soon after daybreak seized, conquered and held a substantial position on the south-western end of Chunuk Bair, and thus established themselves on the main ridge. The centre and left columns, unsupported by any help from Suvla Bay, were unable to make much progress. Night quenched for a while the bloody conflict. Meanwhile fresh Turkish troops continually reached the defence, and owing to the difficulties of water and ground no reinforcements could be employed in the attack.

The battle was renewed with undiminished fury on the 9th. The Anzac right maintained itself on Chunuk Bair; its left attacked Hill Q; its centre sought to join these two positions by occupying the saddle between them. These operations were preceded and sustained by an intense bombardment of every available gun of the Fleet and Army. The left attack, delayed by the darkness and the ground, was late in coming into action and failed to take Hill Q. But in spite of this the 6th Ghurkas and two companies of the 6th South Lancashires, belonging to the centre, striving upwards, gained command of vital positions on the saddle between Chunuk Bair and Hill Q. The heroic officer, Colonel Cecil Allanson, in command of the 6th Ghurkas, who led the assault, has recorded his experiences in the tragedy which followed.<sup>1</sup> He passed the night of the 8th-9th in the firing line.

<sup>1</sup> Written forty-eight hours after the event.

'At an angle of about 35 degrees and about a hundred yards away were the Turks. . . . During the night a message came to me from the General Officer Commanding to try and get up on to 971 at 5.15 a.m., and that from 4.45 to 5.15 the Navy would bombard the top. I was to get all troops near me to co-operate. . . . As I could only get three companies of British troops, I had to be satisfied with this. . . . I had only 15 minutes left; the roar of the artillery preparation was enormous; the hill, which was almost perpendicular, seemed to leap underneath one. I recognized that if we flew up the hill the moment it stopped, we ought to get to the top. I put the three companies into the trenches among my men, and said that the moment they saw me go forward carrying a red flag, every one was to start. I had my watch out, 5.15. I never saw such artillery preparation; the trenches were being torn to pieces; the accuracy was marvellous, as we were only just below. At 5.18 it had not stopped, and I wondered if my watch was wrong. 5.20 silence; I waited three minutes to be certain, great as the risk was. Then off we dashed, all hand in hand, a most perfect advance, and a wonderful sight. . . . At the top we met the Turks; Le Marchand was down, a bayonet through the heart. I got one through the leg, and then for about what appeared 10 minutes, we fought hand to hand, we bit and fisted, and used rifles and pistols as clubs; and then the Turks turned and fled, and I felt a very proud man; the key of the whole Peninsula was ours, and our losses had not been so very great for such a result. Below I saw the Straits, motors and wheeled transport, on the roads leading to Achi Baba. As I looked round I saw we were not being supported, and thought I could help best by going after those [Turks] who had retreated in front of us. We dashed down towards Maidos, but had only got about 100 feet down when suddenly our own Navy put six 12-in. monitor shells into us, and all was terrible confusion.<sup>1</sup> It was a deplorable disaster; we were obviously mistaken for Turks, and we had to get back. It was an appalling sight: the first hit a Ghurka in the face; the place was a mass of blood and limbs and screams, and we all flew back to the summit and to our old position just below.<sup>2</sup> I remained on the crest with about 15 men; it was a wonderful view; below were the Straits, reinforcements coming over from the Asia Minor side, motor-cars flying. We commanded Killid Bahr, and the rear of Achi Baba and the communications to all their Army there. . . . I was now left alone much crippled by the pain of my wound, which was stiffening, and loss of blood. I saw the advance at Suvla

<sup>1</sup> The size of these shells and who fired them have never been established.

<sup>2</sup> 150 men are said to have been killed by these shells.

Bay had failed, though I could not detect more than one or two thousand against them, but I saw large Turkish reinforcements being pushed in that direction. My telephone lines were smashed. . . . I now dropped down into the trenches of the night before, and after getting my wound bound up, proceeded to try and find where all the regiment was; I got them all back in due course, and awaited support before moving up the hill again. Alas! it was never to come, and we were told to hold our position throughout the night of the 9th-10th. During the afternoon we were counter-attacked by large bodies of Turks five times between 5 and 7 p.m., but they never got to within 15 yards of our line. . . . Captain Tomes and Le Marchand are buried on the highest summit of the Chunuk Bair. . . . I was ordered back to make a report. I was very weak and faint. . . . I reported to the General, and told him that unless strong reinforcements were pushed up, and food and water could be sent us, we must come back, but that if we did we gave up the key of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The General then told me that nearly everywhere else the attack had failed, and the regiment would be withdrawn to the lower hills early next morning.'

The morning of the 10th dawned on these vain prodigies of devotion. Twelve thousand men, at least half of those actually involved in the severity of the fighting, had fallen, and the terrible summits flamed unconquered as ever. Nevertheless the Anzac right held with relieved troops their important gain on the Chunuk Bair, and against this the Turkish reserves were darkly gathering.

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We have seen how General Liman von Sanders spent May 8, awaiting with impatience in the hills behind Anafarta the arrival of reinforcements from Bulair. What meanwhile was happening at Suvla Bay? Our military annals, old and new, are not so lacking in achievement, that one need shrink from faithful record.

Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stopford, Commander of the 9th Corps, had arrived with his staff in the sloop *Jonquil* at daylight on the 7th. He had remained on the *Jonquil* on account of the facilities of wireless and signal communication. During the afternoon of the 8th he had paid a visit to the shore. General Stopford was an agreeable and cultivated gentleman who fifteen years before had served in the South African War as Military Secretary to Sir Redvers Buller. After commanding the London District, he had left the Army in 1909, and had lived until the outbreak of the great struggle in a retirement unhappily marked by much ill-health. From this seclusion he had been drawn,

like many others, by the enormous expansion of our land forces. He had been entrusted by Lord Kitchener with the task of training an Army Corps in England, and he now found himself for the first time in his life in a position of high and direct responsibility and in actual command of troops in the presence of the enemy. In these circumstances we are certainly entitled to assume that he did his best.

The natural disquietudes with which he had contemplated the nocturnal landing on a hostile shore were no sooner relieved by success, than another set of serious considerations presented themselves. The enemy might be more numerous than the Staff believed; they might have more trenches than the aeroplane reconnaissance had reported. Moreover, they might at any time resume the desultory shelling of the Beaches which had died away on the evening of the 7th. In this situation the measures which he considered most necessary were the reorganization of the troops who had landed, the improvement of their supplies particularly in regard to water, the digging of trenches to secure the ground they had gained, and the landing of as much artillery as possible to support their further advance. In these occupations August 8, the second twenty-four hours since the landing, passed peacefully away, while his Chief-of-Staff, General Reed, who shared his Chief's outlook to the full, prepared the orders and arrangements for an advance at daybreak on the 9th. 'The second day of the IXth Corps' stay at Suvla,' writes General Callwell, at this time Director of Operations at the War Office, 'was, from the fighting point of view, practically a day of rest.'<sup>1</sup> We may pause to survey the scene on both sides of the front this sunny August afternoon. On the one hand, the placid, prudent, elderly English gentleman with his 20,000 men spread around the beaches, the front lines sitting on the tops of shallow trenches, smoking and cooking, with here and there an occasional rifle shot, others bathing by hundreds in the bright blue bay where, disturbed hardly by a single shell, floated the great ships of war: on the other, the skilful German stamping with impatience for the arrival of his divisions, expecting with every hour to see his scanty covering forces brushed aside, while the furious Kemal animated his fanatic soldiers and hurled them forward towards the battle.

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Sir Ian Hamilton's General Staff Officer for Operations, Colonel Aspinall, had been ordered to report on the Suvla situation for the Commander-in-Chief. He arrived on the morning of the 8th. Here is his account<sup>2</sup>:—

<sup>1</sup> *The Dardanelles Campaign*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Aspinall has placed this statement at my disposal.

'On our arrival in Suvla Bay we at once gathered from the appearance of the place that the operation had been a complete success. The whole Bay was at peace. The large stretch of water was crowded with transports and supply ships unloading their stores without any interference by the enemy. There was no sound of firing on the shore; and all round the Bay were clusters of naked men bathing in the sea.

'I at once went ashore on the southern side of the Bay to try and find Corps Headquarters, but could obtain no information as to their locality. On the Beach at which I landed hundreds of men were sitting resting under the cliffs, and I particularly noticed that an abundance of fresh water was trickling down the face of these cliffs from the grassy slopes above.

'Finding no one in authority, I pushed inland. There was still no sound of firing, and I felt more confident than ever that we must have reached the hills on the Eastern side of the Suvla Plain. Shortly afterwards, however, I met the Chief of the Royal Engineers of the 11th Division. To my astonishment this officer informed me that our front line was only a very short way inland and that there were no signs of a fresh advance being ordered. The Corps Commander, he stated, was not ashore but still had his headquarters on board *H.M.S. Jonquil*.

'Shortly afterwards I came across Major General Hammersley, commanding the 11th Division. General Hammersley informed me that he had no orders to advance until next morning and that he did not think it would be possible until more guns had been landed.

'I then returned to the shore en route to Corps Headquarters. During the whole of this time, with the exception of a few rounds in the neighbourhood of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, I had heard no firing of any kind.

'On arrival at the Beach the Commander of the 11th Division Artillery came up to me and asked whether I came from General Headquarters. On my reply in the affirmative he begged me to do everything in my power to "get a move on." He was convinced that it was essential to press on at once, but nothing was being done and apparently nothing was going to be done.

'I then proceeded on board *H.M.S. Jonquil*. General Stopford greeted me by "Well, Aspinall, the men have done splendidly and have been magnificent." "But they haven't reached the hills, Sir," I replied. "No," he answered, "but they are ashore!" I replied that I was sure the Commander-in-Chief would be disappointed that they had not yet reached the high ground covering the Bay, in accordance with the orders, and I impressed upon him the urgent importance of

moving forward at the earliest possible moment, before the enemy's reinforcements forestalled him on the hills. General Stopford replied that he quite realized the importance of losing no time, but that it was impossible to advance until the men had rested. He intended to make a fresh advance on the following day.

I then went on board the Admiral's flagship and sent the following telegram to General Headquarters:—

"Just been ashore where I found all quiet. No rifle fire, no artillery fire, and apparently no Turks. IX Corps resting. Feel confident that golden opportunities are being lost and look upon situation as serious."

'Shortly after sending this message I heard that the Commander-in-Chief was already on his way to Suvla, and a few minutes later he came in to harbour on the Admiral's yacht.'

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The harmony of Suvla Bay was marred late in the afternoon by the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Ian Hamilton had been persuaded by his Staff that his proper place during this great triple battle was in his regular headquarters at Imbros. Here then he remained during the whole of the 7th and the morning of the 8th, digesting such information as the telegrams from the various sectors of the front contained. But at 11.30 on the morning of the 8th he became so disquieted with the want of news from Suvla that he could bear his isolation no longer, and determined to go there at once. A destroyer, the *Arno*, had been specially placed at his disposal by the Navy for the period of the operations, and to the *Arno* accordingly signals for instant departure were made. It then appeared that the local Rear-Admiral had for reasons connected with the conditions of the boilers, ordered the fires to be drawn from this vessel, and that she could not move for six or seven hours. Finding himself thus, in his own words, 'marooned' the Commander-in-Chief became both distressed and indignant. His complaints induced the local Rear-Admiral to offer him a passage on the yacht *Triad*, which was leaving for Suvla at 4.15 p.m. On this accordingly the General embarked and reached Suvla Bay about 6 o'clock. Here he found the *Chatham* with Admiral de Robeck and Commodore Keyes on board. They expressed to him their profound uneasiness at the paralysis which seemed to have seized upon the troops. On the top of this came Colonel Aspinall. On hearing his report the Commander-in-Chief boarded the *Jonquil*, where he found General Stopford, tired from his walk on the shore, but otherwise happy. General Stopford said that 'everything was

quite all right and going well.' He proceeded to explain that the men had been very tired, that he had not been able to get water up to them or land his guns as quickly as he hoped; he had therefore decided to postpone the occupation of the high ground which 'might lead to a regular battle' until next morning; that meanwhile the Brigadiers had been told to gain what ground they could without serious fighting, but that actually they had not occupied any dominating tactical point.

The Commander-in-Chief did not accept this result. He knew that reinforcements were marching southward from Bulair. He believed that the Anafarta Ridge was still unoccupied by any appreciable enemy force. He apprehended, and rightly, that what might be gained on the evening of the 8th without fighting, would involve a bloody struggle in the dawn. He urged an immediate advance on Ismail Oglu and Tekke hills. General Stopford raised a number of objections, and the Commander-in-Chief determined to visit the Divisional Headquarters on shore and see for himself. General Stopford did not accompany him.

General Hammersley, the Divisional Commander, was not able to give a very clear account of the situation, and after a considerable discussion the Commander-in-Chief determined personally to intervene. General Hammersley had told him that the 32nd Brigade was available in the neighbourhood of Sulajik and was capable of moving forward. Sir Ian Hamilton thereupon told the Divisional Commander 'in the most distinct terms that he wished this Brigade to advance and dig themselves in on the crest line.' General Hammersley apparently concurred in this, and afterwards claimed that he had acted on his own responsibility, not as the result of a direct order, but of the expression of a wish personally made by the Commander-in-Chief. Accordingly after Sir Ian Hamilton had returned to the *Triad*, General Hammersley directed the 32nd Brigade to concentrate and endeavour to gain a foothold on the high ground north of Kuchuk Anafarta. He specially mentioned the 6th East Yorkshire Battalion as one that should be recalled from its existing position and concentrated. On these decisions darkness fell.

The 32nd Brigade was not, however, disposed as its Divisional Commander imagined. On the contrary, with praiseworthy initiative two battalions had pushed forward far in advance of the rest of the 9th Corps, and finding no opposition, one had occupied a good position near Abrikjar and the other was actually entrenching itself on Scimitar Hill. It is extraordinary that on such a quiet day this should not have been known at the Divisional Headquarters less than two miles away. Both these battalions were recalled from the positions which they had gained and were concentrated for the advance to Kuchuk Anafarta. These move-



ments deranged the general plan of attack which was fixed for dawn; they involved the evacuation of the valuable position of Scimitar Hill, never afterwards, in spite of all efforts, to be regained. Nor in the end was it possible for the 32nd Brigade to make its attack until daybreak.

At dawn on the morning of the 9th the British advance from Suvla was at last resumed. The attack was delivered by the 11th Division, the 31st Brigade of the 10th Division, and by some battalions of the 53rd Territorial Division which had been newly landed, and was directed against the high ground from Kuchuk Anafarta on the left to Ismail Oglu Hill. Simultaneously, however, the counter-attack ordered by Liman von Sanders also began. The leading reinforcements from the 7th and 12th Turkish Divisions had arrived overnight, and the enemy was perhaps three times as strong as on the previous day and constantly increasing. No sooner had the 6th East Yorkshire Battalion been withdrawn from Scimitar Hill than the Turks had reoccupied it. It was necessary that this hill should be taken before an effective advance could be made on its right against Ismail Oglu Hill. The 31st Brigade of the 10th Division therefore assaulted Scimitar Hill, but was unable to recapture it, and the whole of the right of the attack was prejudiced in consequence of the failure to regain this feature. The 32nd Brigade on the left of the line likewise failed to reach its goal, and in parts of the front the troops were driven back in disorder by the ardour with which the Turkish newcomers threw themselves into the fight.

The rest of the 53rd Division were landed during the 9th, and the battle was renewed on the morning of the 10th and maintained all day. Both Scimitar and Ismail Oglu Hills were partially captured, but were lost again under the pressure of violent counter-attacks. When night fell over the battlefield, lurid with fiercely burning scrub, the IXth Corps occupied positions very little more advanced than those which it had gained on the first day of its landing, and ample Turkish forces stood entrenched and victorious upon all the decisive positions. The losses had not exceeded a thousand on the 7th, but nearly 8,000 officers and men were killed or wounded at Suvla Bay on the 9th and 10th.

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The closing event of the battle has now to be recorded. When daylight broke on the morning of the 10th the British from Anzac still held their hard-won positions on Chunuk Bair. Two battalions of the 13th Division—the 6th North Lancashires and the 5th Wiltshires—had relieved the worn-out troops who had stormed the hill. They had barely settled down in their new position when they were exposed to a tremendous attack. After

his successful action at Suvla Bay on the 9th, Mustapha Kemal passed the night in preparing a supreme effort to regain this priceless ridge. The whole of the Turkish 8th Division brought from the Asiatic shore with three additional battalions and aided by a powerful and converging artillery were led forward to the assault by Mustapha Kemal in person. The thousand British rifles—all for whom room could be found on the narrow summit—were engulfed and overwhelmed in this fierce flood. Very few of the Lancashire men escaped, and the Wiltshire battalion was literally annihilated. Flushed with victory the Turks pressed over the summit and poured down the steep face of the mountain in dense waves of men intent on driving the invaders into the sea. But here they encountered directly the whole blast of fire from the Fleet and from every gun and machine gun in the Anzac-British line. Under this storm the advancing Turkish masses were effectually crushed. Of three or four thousand men who descended the seaward slopes of the hill, only a few hundred regained the crest. But there they stayed—and stayed till the end of the story. Thus by the 10th the whole of the second great effort to win the Straits had ended at all points without decisive gains.

Two serious actions had still to be fought before the failure was accepted as final. The 54th Territorial Division had now landed at Suvla, and with its support on the 15th and 16th two brigades of the 10th Irish Division attacked along the high Kiretch Tepe Sirt Ridge which bound Suvla Bay on the north. Well supported by fire from the sea, these troops under General Mahon at first made good progress. But in the end they were compelled by counter-attacks and bombing to give up most of the ground they had gained. This action does not bulk very largely in British accounts, and its critical character seems scarcely to have been appreciated. Liman von Sanders says of it:—

'If during their attacks on August 15 and 16 the British had captured and held the Kiretch Tepe, the whole position of the 5th Army would have been outflanked. The British might have then achieved a decisive and final victory. The ridge of Kiretch Tepe and its southern slopes command from the north the wide plain of Anafarta. From its eastern slope the offensive could have been easily continued with decisive results along and covered by the big depression which leads to Akbash and thence right across the Peninsula. . . There can be no doubt that in view of the great British superiority a complete success had been possible for them.'

A further effort was made on August 21, directed this time to the capture of Ismail Oglu Hill. For this purpose the 29th

Division was brought from Helles and the dismounted Yeomanry Division from Egypt to reinforce the 10th, 11th, 53rd and 54th Divisions now all landed at Suvla Bay. Strong forces of the Anzac left under General Cox also co-operated. But the Turks were now perfectly fortified and in great strength. Less than sixty guns, only sixteen of which were even of medium calibre, were available to support the attack, and for these the supply of ammunition was exiguous. The battle was fiercely fought in burning scrub and a sudden and unusual mist hampered the attacking artillery, and though the Anzac left gained and held some valuable ground, no general results were achieved. 'The attacks,' said Liman von Sanders, 'were repulsed by the Turks after heavy loss and after putting in the last reserve, including the cavalry.' The British losses, particularly of the Yeomanry and the 29th Division who assaulted with the utmost determination, were heavy and fruitless. On this dark battlefield of fog and flame Brigadier-General Lord Longford, Brigadier-General Kenna, V.C., Colonel Sir John Milbanke, V.C., and other paladins fell. This was the largest action fought upon the Peninsula, and it was destined to be the last. Since the new offensive had begun the British losses had exceeded 45,000, while those of the Turks were not less than 40,000. Already on the 16th Sir Ian Hamilton had telegraphed to Lord Kitchener stating that 50,000 additional rifles and drafts of 45,000 were required to enable offensive operations to be continued. These reinforcements, for reasons which the next chapter will explain, the British Government found themselves unable to supply, and a complete deadlock supervened along the fronts of both battered and exhausted armies.

At every phase in the battle, down even to the last action on the 21st, the issue between victory and defeat hung trembling in the balance. The slightest change in the fell sequence of events would have been sufficient to turn the scale. But for the forty-eight precious hours lost by the IXth Corps at Suvla, positions must have been won from which decisive operations were possible. 'We all felt,' wrote Sanders, 'that the British leaders at the successive landings which began on August 6 stayed too long on the beach instead of pushing forward inland at all costs from each landing-place.' Had the experienced 29th Division been employed at this point, had the Yeomanry from Egypt been made available from the beginning, success could hardly have been denied. When it was too late leaders of the highest quality—Byng, Fanshawe, Maude—were sent from France to replace those whose inertia or incapacity had produced such grievous results. These new Generals could be spared on the morrow of disaster, but not while their presence might have commanded success.

Criticism severe and searching has been applied to many aspects of the Battle of Suvla Bay, but history will pronounce that it was not upon the Gallipoli Peninsula that it was lost. It is rarely that Opportunity returns. Yet in spite of the errors and misfortunes of the original operations, she had offered herself once more to our hand. But the golden moment was not in August. It was at the end of June or the beginning of July. And that moment was needlessly thrown away. 'After the failure of the attacks which followed the first landing,' say the Dardanelles Commissioners (Conclusion 5), 'there was undue delay in deciding upon the course to be pursued in the future. Sir Ian Hamilton's appreciation was forwarded on May 17. It was not considered by the War Council or the Cabinet until June 7. The reconstruction of the Government which took place at this most critical period was the main cause of the delay. As a consequence the despatch of the reinforcements asked for by Sir Ian Hamilton in his appreciation was postponed for six weeks.' This delay and the neglect to utilize the surplus forces in Egypt robbed us of the numerical superiority which it was in our power to command and which was essential to a victorious offensive. Had a reasonable action been taken even from May 17 onwards, as will be seen from the table on the next page, 15 allied divisions aggregating 150,000 rifles, could have attacked 10 Turkish divisions aggregating 70,000 to 75,000 rifles in the second week of July. Instead the mistakes which were committed in Downing Street and Whitehall condemned us gratuitously to a battle of equal numbers in August and to a hazard of the most critical kind, and from that hazard we emerged unsuccessful. The errors and miscarriages which took place upon the battlefield cannot be concealed, but they stand on a lower plane than these sovereign and irretrievable misdirections.

We may now set forth the cause of defeat in the cruel clarity of tabular statement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See page 877.

# THE RELATIVE STRENGTHS

Date.	Turkish Divisions : Rifles.	Actual British and French Divisions : Rifles.	Available <sup>1</sup> British and French Divisions : Rifles.
February 18 (Opening of the Naval Attack)	nil	nil	4 36,000
March 20 (End of the Naval Attack)	2 14,000	4 40,000 (but without the 29th Division)	5 60,000
April 25 (The first Military Attack)	6 42,000	5 50,000	5 60,000
July 7 (Earliest date for the second Military Attack)	10 70,000-75,000	8 52,000	14 150,000 <sup>3</sup>
August 7 (The Battle of Suvla Bay)	20 <sup>4</sup> 120,000	14 120,000	14 120,000 <sup>5</sup>

The three favourable occasions are shown in squares. It needed only a stroke of the pen in Whitehall to have produced any of them.

<sup>1</sup> 'Available' means ready, doing nothing, capable of being sent so as to be on the spot on the date mentioned, and actually sent within a month of that date.

<sup>2</sup> British { From home : 29th, 42nd, 52nd, 10th, 11th, 13th, 53rd, 54th and Royal Naval Divisions  
From Egypt : Yeomanry Division, Indian Division, and various details  
Australasian : The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps  
The French Corps (1 Division with additional Units) . . . . .

<sup>3</sup> The reduction of 10,000 from the July figures is accounted for by a month's net wastage among the Divisions already on the Peninsula.

<sup>4</sup> The following are the Turkish Divisions on the spot : 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 20th, 26th and 27th.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE RUIN OF THE BALKANS<sup>1</sup>

Jealousies of the Balkan States—Their Common Interest—The Rewards of Combination—Baffling Policy of the Great Allies—Universal Misfortune—The Russian Defeats—Waiting on the Dardanelles—Serbian Obstinacy—Cumbrous and Tardy Allied Diplomacy—Consequences of the Battle of Suvla Bay—A New Tremendous Event—Lord Kitchener returns from France—Decision for a great Offensive in France—My Protest and Warning—The Dardanelles Army left to Languish—An Extraordinary Incident—General Sarrail's Plan—General Joffre's Promise—My Memorandum of September 21—The Stokes Gun—Bulgaria begins to Move—The Battles of Loos and Champagne—Their Sequel—Bulgaria Mobilizes—Mackensen at Temesvar—Repercussion on Greece—Her Treaty of Alliance—The Salonika Project—King Constantine Dismisses Monsieur Venizelos—The Only Remedy—The Advice of the Experts—The Cabinet Compromise—The French Decision—Salonika: General Joffre's Threat—The Final Offer of the British Government—The Storm Bursts on Serbia.

THE Christian States of the Balkans were the children of oppression and revolt. For four hundred years they had dwelt under the yoke of the Turkish conqueror. They had recovered their freedom after cruel struggles only during the last hundred years. Their national characteristics were marked by these hard experiences. Their constitutions and dynasties resulted from them. Their populations were poor, fierce and proud. Their governments were divided from one another by irreconcilable ambitions and jealousies. Every one of them at some ancient period in its history had been the head of a considerable Empire in these regions, and though Serbian and Bulgarian splendours had been of brief duration compared to the glories of Greece, each looked back to this period of greatness as marking the measure of its historic rights. All therefore simultaneously considered themselves entitled to the ownership of territories which they had in bygone centuries possessed only in succession. All therefore were plunged in convulsive quarrels and intrigues.

It is to this cause that their indescribable sufferings have been mainly and primarily due. It was not easy for all or any of these small States to lift themselves out of this dismal and dangerous quagmire or find a firm foothold on which to stand. Behind the

<sup>1</sup> See General Map of the Balkan Peninsula on page 887.

national communities, themselves acting and reacting upon each other in confusion, there were in each country party and political divisions and feuds sufficient to shake a powerful Empire. Every Balkan statesman had to thread his way to power in his own country through complications, dangers and surprising transformations, more violent, more intense than those which the domestic affairs of great nations reveal. He arrived hampered by his past and pursued by foes and jealousies, and, thus harassed and weakened, had to cope with the ever-shifting combinations of Balkan politics, as these in turn were influenced by the immense convulsions of the Great War.

In addition to all this came the policy of the three great allied Powers. France and Russia had each its own interests and outlook, its favourite Balkan State and its favourite party in each State. Great Britain had a vague desire to see them all united, and a lofty impartiality and detachment scarcely less baffling. To this were super-added the distracting influences of the various Sovereigns and their Teutonic origins or relations. In consequence, the situation was so chaotic and unstable, there were so many vehement points of view rising and falling, that British, French and Russian statesmen never succeeded in devising any firm, comprehensive policy. On the contrary, by their isolated, half-hearted and often contradictory interventions, they contributed that culminating element of disorder which led every one of these small States successively to the most hideous forms of ruin.

Yet all the time the main interests of the three great Allies and of the four Balkan kingdoms were identical, and all could have been protected and advanced by a single and simple policy. The ambitions of every one of the Balkan States could have been satisfied at the expense of the Turkish and Austrian Empires. There was enough for all, and more than enough. The interest of the three great Allies was to range the Balkan States against these Empires. United, among themselves, the Balkan States were safe: joined to the three Allies, they could not fail to gain the territories they coveted. The addition of the united Balkan States to the forces of the Entente must have involved the downfall of Austria and Turkey and the speedy, victorious termination of the war. For every one there was a definite prize. For Roumania, Transylvania; for Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Dalmatia and the Banat of Temesvar; for Bulgaria, Adrianople and the Enos-Midia line; for Greece, Smyrna and its hinterland; and for all, safety, wealth and power.

To realize these advantages, certain concessions had to be made by the Balkan States among themselves. Roumania could restore the Dobrudja to Bulgaria; Serbia could liberate the Bulgarian

districts of Macedonia; Greece could give Kavalla as a make-weight; and as an immediate solatium to Greece, there was Cyprus which could have been thrown into the scale. As the final levers, there were the financial resources of Great Britain and whatever military and naval forces the Entente might decide to employ in this theatre.

It is astonishing that when all interests were the same, when so many powerful means of leverage and stimulus were at hand, everything should without exception have gone amiss. If in February, 1915, or possibly after the Turkish declaration of war in November, 1914, the British, French and Russian Governments could have agreed upon a common policy in the Balkans—and had sent plenipotentiaries of the highest order to the Balkan Peninsula to negotiate on a clear, firm basis with each and all of these States—a uniform, coherent action could have been devised and enforced with measureless benefits to all concerned. Instead, the situation was dealt with by partial expedients suggested by the rapid and baffling procession of events. Everything was vainly offered or done by the Allies successively and tardily, which done all at once and in good time would have achieved the result.

The Balkan States offered by far the greatest possibility open to allied diplomacy at the beginning of 1915. This was never envisaged and planned as if it were the great battle which indeed it was. Fitful, sporadic, half-hearted, changeable, unrelated expedients were all that the statesmen of Russia, France and Britain were able to employ. Nor is it right for public opinion in these countries to condemn the Balkan States and Balkan politicians or sovereigns too sweepingly. The hesitations of the King of Roumania, the craft of King Ferdinand, the shifts and evasions of King Constantine all arose from the baffling nature of the Balkan problem and the lack of policy of the Allies. Serbia, indeed, fought on desperately and blindly without consideration for any other interests but her own and with frightful consequences to herself, ultimately repaired only by the final victory. Roumania was throughout in peril of her life and perplexed to the foundations of her being. When at last, after infinite hesitations, bargainings and precautions, she entered the war, she was too late to decide or abridge the struggle but in good time to be torn in pieces. Bulgaria turned traitor alike to her past and to her future, and after many exertions was plunged in the woe of the vanquished. Greece, rescued in the nick of time by courage and genius, and emerging with little cost upon the side of the victors, survived incorrigible to squander all that she had gained. Yet in Roumania there was Také Jonesco always pointing clear and true; in Bulgaria, Stambulisky, braving the wrath of King Ferdinand and marching proudly to his long prison with the



names of England and Russia on his lips; and in Greece, Venizelos, threading his way through indescribable embarrassments and triumphing over unimaginable difficulties, preserved his country for a time in spite of herself and might well have limited the miseries of Europe.

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August, 1915, saw the culmination of the Russian disasters. By the end of June the German-Austrian offensive had driven the Russians out of nearly all the southern half of their huge Galician-Polish salient. This had been reduced to a semicircle 170 miles across, with Brest Litovsk at its centre and Warsaw almost on its outer circumference. Lemberg had been lost. Mackensen's front was now faced almost north and ahead of him lay the four railway lines which fed the salient. On July 13 he commenced, with a German and two Austrian Armies, an advance against the southernmost railway [the Kowel-Cholm-Lublin-Ivangorod line], with Field-Marshal Woyrsch on his left pressing eastward. By August 1 he was across the railway in the centre at Cholm and Lublin, and four days later Ivangorod and Warsaw were evacuated by the Russians. Novo-Georgievsk, where some eighty-five thousand second-class troops had been collected, made a show of defence, but capitulated on the 20th. But this was not the end of the disasters. In the north, in Lithuania, the German Eighth and Tenth Armies under Hindenburg, reinforced by German troops from the south where the line had been shortened, moved forward, and on August 10 had taken Kovno. All the Russian troops between Kovno and Riga were thus in danger of envelopment and fell back. Even Brest Litovsk, the long-vaunted model fortress, did not hold out long. Invested on August 11 on three sides, it was abandoned on the 26th after the forts on the south-west front had been stormed. Thus the last semblance of the great Salient had disappeared, and the Russian front, except for a forward bend covering Riga, had approximated to a north and south line. The Russians had evaded envelopment and capture, but all their gains in Galicia had gone, they had lost Poland, 325,000 prisoners and more than three thousand guns, besides rifles and equipment which it was impossible to replace. Worse than all, the Tzar was induced to remove the Grand Duke Nicholas from his command and send him to the Caucasus.

The Russian defeats from April onwards had reacted most unfortunately against Italy. In 1914 Austria could spare no more than local corps to watch the Italian frontier. By the date of the Italian declaration of war she had managed to collect 122 battalions, 10 squadrons and 216 guns against Italy, disposed in

mixed groups behind carefully constructed entrenchments. But henceforward there was a constant flow of reinforcements from the Galician theatre. The Italian offensive towards Trieste, known as the first and second battles of the Isonzo, in June and July carried the Italians 6 miles into enemy territory, and thereafter left them as firmly rooted in trench warfare as the Armies on the Western front. The Italian operations in the Tyrol led to no more than the occupation of five small separate salients of Austrian territory. Thus to the Russian disasters, was added the Italian deadlock: and both exercised a fatal influence upon the Bulgarian mind.

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Nevertheless all eyes in the Balkans were riveted on the Gallipoli Peninsula until the result of the Battle of Suvla Bay became known. Till it was lost the Bulgarians held their hand, and in the month of July there was still hopeful possibilities of bringing them in on the side of the Allies. The Austro-German attack upon Serbia which had seemed so imminent in February had not matured during all the months of the summer. The deep anxieties with which some members of the Cabinet viewed this great danger were happily not borne out as the months slipped away. I know of no cause for the delay of this attack other than the influence exercised upon the Balkan States and upon Bulgaria by the operations at the Dardanelles, and the belief so widely held throughout the Balkan States that England would never relinquish such an effort without achieving success. The continued fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the knowledge that large reinforcements were pouring out, and that another great trial of strength in that theatre was impending, dominated the action of Bulgaria; and the action of Bulgaria was the fact which in turn governed the Austro-German attack on Serbia.

I was, as has been shown, strongly of opinion during the month of July that we ought not to stake the whole Balkan policy solely on the result of a battle in Gallipoli, but that, while doing everything in our power to secure a victory there, we should also strive to win Bulgaria. This could be done only by territorial concessions forced upon Greece and Serbia, combined with the granting of loans and the expectation of success in the Dardanelles. The imminent peril in which Serbia stood, and the restricted conditions under which the Allies could afford her protection, made it indispensable that she should cede, and if necessary be made to surrender, the uncontested zone in Macedonia to the Bulgarians, to whom it belonged by race, by history, by treaty, and—until it was taken from them in the second Balkan War—by conquest.

Serbia, even when at the last gasp during the first Austrian attack upon her in 1914, had found it necessary to keep large numbers of troops in the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia to hold down the native population. Right and reason, the claims of justice, and the most imperious calls of necessity, alike counselled the Serbians to surrender at least the uncontested zone. To the ordinary exhortations of diplomacy were added special appeals by the Sovereigns and the Rulers of the allied countries. The Prince Regent of Serbia was besought by the Tsar, by the President of the French Republic, and by King George V, to make a concession right in itself, necessary in the common cause, vital to the safety of Serbia. But to all these appeals the Serbian Government and Parliament proved obdurate. The allied diplomacy, moving ponderously forward—every telegram and measure having to be agreed to by all the other parties to the alliance—had just reached the point of refusing any further supplies of stores or money to Serbia unless she complied with their insistent demand, when the final invasion began.

The same sort of thing happened about Kavalla. M. Venizelos, with his almost unerring judgment of great issues, was prepared to imperil his whole personal popularity in Greece and place himself at a deadly disadvantage in his controversies with the King by intimating his readiness to acquiesce in the cession to Bulgaria of Kavalla in certain circumstances. Had the Allies been able to secure for Bulgaria the immediate cession of the uncontested zone in Macedonia and the port of Kavalla, it seems very probable that they might have been induced during the month of July to come to our aid and to march on Adrianople.

It seems certain that, even if this full result had not been obtained, the tangible cession of this territory to Bulgaria at the instance of the Allies would have made it impossible for King Ferdinand to carry his country into the hostile camp. Monsieur Radoslavoff gave in brutally frank language a perfectly truthful account of the Bulgarian position in these months. No effective measures were however taken, and all was left to the hazard of the battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

It would be unjust not to recognize at the same time the extraordinary difficulties with which Sir Edward Grey was confronted owing to the need of combining the diplomatic action of four separate great Powers in so delicate and painful a business as virtually coercing a then friendly Greece and an allied and suffering Serbia, specially shielded by Russia, to make territorial concessions deeply repugnant to them. Although a united diplomacy might have assisted, nothing less than a decisive victory at the Dardanelles could at this time have counteracted in the Balkans the terrible tide of Russian defeat.

By the end of the third week in August all prospects of an immediate victory at this vital point had vanished. When our failure was fully appreciated by the competent military personages at Sofia, the Bulgarian King and Government finally made up their minds to join Germany. From that moment the ruin of Serbia was certain and irremediable. The quaking dyke of the Dardanelles campaign that had so long held off the deluge had yielded at last. It was henceforth only a question of the timetables of Austro-German troop movements. Serbia, however, though fully conscious of her danger, remained recalcitrant to all appeals to make effective concessions. Till the last moment she kept her heel on the conquered Bulgarian districts of Macedonia, and maintained a stubborn front to the overwhelming forces that were gathering against her.

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A new tremendous event was now to strike across this darkening situation. At a Conference held at Calais early in July, the representatives of the Cabinet, viz. the Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener and Mr. Balfour, had, in accordance with the convictions of the overwhelming majority of their colleagues, argued against a further Anglo-French offensive in the West in 1915. They had proposed that the allied operations in France and Flanders should be confined to what was described as an 'offensive defensive' or, to speak more accurately, an active defensive. The French had agreed; General Joffre had agreed. The agreement was open and formal. And it was on this basis that we had looked forward and prepared for the new battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula. No sooner, however, had General Joffre left the Conference than, notwithstanding these agreements, he had calmly resumed the development of his plans for his great attack in Champagne, in which he confidently expected to break the German lines and roll them back. It was not until after the Battle of Suvla Bay had been finally lost, and we were more deeply committed in the Peninsula than ever before, that we became aware of this.

To avoid unnecessary circulation of secret documents it had been arranged that members of the War Committee wishing to read the daily War Office telegrams could do so each morning at the War Office in Lord Kitchener's anteroom. It was my practice to read every word every day. On the morning of August 21 I was thus engaged when the private secretary informed me that Lord Kitchener, who had just returned from the French Headquarters, wished to see me. I entered his room and found him standing with his back to the light. He looked at me sideways with a very odd expression on his face. I saw he had some dis-

closure of importance to make, and waited. After appreciable hesitation he told me that he had agreed with the French to a great offensive in France. I said at once that there was no chance of success. He said the scale would be greater than anything ever before conceived; if it succeeded, it would restore everything, including of course the Dardanelles. He had an air of suppressed excitement, like a man who has taken a great decision of terrible uncertainty and is about to put it into execution. He was of course bracing himself for the announcement he had to make that morning to the War Committee and to the Cabinet. I continued unconvinced. It was then 11 o'clock, and he drove me across in his car to Downing Street.

The Committee assembled. Lord Kitchener had no doubt apprised the Prime Minister beforehand, and he was immediately invited to make his statement. He told us that owing to the situation in Russia he could not longer maintain the attitude which was agreed upon in conjunction with the French at Calais, i.e. that a real serious offensive on a large scale in the West should be postponed until the Allies were ready. As he put it to us, he had himself urged upon General Joffre the adoption of the offensive. In view of the fact that, as we now know, the French plans and preparations had long been in progress, had indeed never been interrupted, this must have been a work of supererogation. I immediately protested against departure from the decisions of the Cabinet maturely made and endorsed by the Calais Conference, and against an operation that could only lead to useless slaughter on a gigantic scale. I pointed out that we had neither the ammunition nor the superiority in men necessary to warrant such an assault on the enemy's fortified line; that it could not take place in time effectively to relieve Russia; that it would not prevent the Germans from pursuing their initiative in theatres other than the West; and that it would rupture fatally our plans for opening the Dardanelles. The following record has been preserved of these remarks:—

'*Mr. Churchill* expressed his regret at such a course. The German forces on the Western Front had not been reduced and were some 2,000,000 against the Allies 2,500,000. This amounted to a superiority for the Allies of five to four, which was inadequate for the offensive. Since our last offensive effort our relative strength had not altered, while the German defences had been strengthened.

'It seemed to him that in the hope of relieving Russia and to gratify our great and natural desire to do so, the Allies might throw away 200,000 or 300,000 lives<sup>1</sup> and [much] ammunition,

<sup>1</sup> Obviously this should read 'men,' meaning men killed and wounded, i.e. casualties.

and might possibly gain a little ground. The attack on May 9 (Festubert-Arras) had been a failure, and the line had not been altered by it. *After* an expenditure of lives and ammunition in this way by us, the Germans would have a chance worth seizing, and it would be worth their while to bring back great forces from the East. A superiority of two to one was laid down as necessary to attack and we (the Allies) had not got it.'

These views were not seriously disputed, but it was urged that the French would move in any case, and that if we did not march too, the alliance would be destroyed. Lord Kitchener was careful not to hold out any expectation of 'a decisive success,' and when pressed to define 'a decisive success' he accepted my expression 'a fundamental strategic alteration of the line.' 'There is,' he said, 'a great deal of truth in what Mr. Churchill has said, but unfortunately we have to make war as we must and not as we should like to.'

I besought the Cabinet, which followed the War Council an hour later, not to yield to the French impatience without a further conference at which all the arguments could be stated and a final appeal made. I was strongly supported by others. I was forced to admit that if the French, after hearing what we had to say, still persisted in their intention, we should of course have to conform; but I urged that a last effort should be made to avert the vast, futile and disastrous slaughter that was now impending. Sir John French, who was in London, was interrogated by the Cabinet. He also declined to give any assurance of success, and was further extremely dissatisfied with the particular sector of attack in which he was required to operate. He had not ammunition for more than seven days' offensive battle. Nevertheless he was quite ready, if ordered, to throw himself into it with a good heart. I visited him privately at Lancaster Gate, where he was staying for the night, and urged my opinion. He used the usual arguments about the necessity of acting in harmony with the French, and then unfolded to me the fact that General Joffre intended to employ no fewer than forty divisions in the French sector of attack alone. Although I must admit that the tremendous scale of the operation seemed to carry the issue into the region of the unknown, I continued recalcitrant and quitted my friend in the deepest anxiety. I saw that we were confronted with the ruin of the campaign alike in the East and in the West.

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The decision to make a general attack in France involved the immediate starvation, or at any rate malnutrition, in ammunition and in drafts, of the army on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Although large numbers of men had to be sent thither merely to keep Sir



## THE BALKAN PENINSULA

Ian Hamilton's units in the field, this number, while enough to be a heavy loss elsewhere, was not sufficient to produce any useful result. The operations on the Peninsula came to a standstill, and the Turks hastened to replace their heavy losses and reorganize their shaken and in some cases shattered formations. Meanwhile, disease and despondency were at work in our own army. The anguish of supreme success narrowly but fatally missed, the sense of being ill-supported from home, the uncertainty about the future intentions of the Government, the shortage of ammunition, the threatening advent of winter, the rigorous privations of officers and men, exposed the Dardanelles army to the most melancholy ordeal. The numerous and powerful opponents of the enterprise, the advocates of evacuation, the partisans of competing schemes, found themselves well supplied with all that they desired. In these depressing conditions only the patient endurance of the British troops and the unquenchable spirit of Anzac enabled a firm posture of the army and its consequent existence to be maintained.

But now a very curious incident occurred, which added greatly to the perplexities of the British Government. The political power and influence of General Sarrail rested upon foundations which it was not easy then precisely to define or explain. This officer, having been removed by General Joffre in July from the Verdun command in which he had distinguished himself, had obtained, through profound political influence, the command of the French troops in the Orient in succession to General Gouraud, who had been seriously wounded. Whatever dispute there might be about his military achievements, his irreligious convictions were above suspicion. There appeared to be an understanding in French governing circles that he was to be assigned an important independent rôle in the East, which would give him the opportunity of gathering the military laurels from which the French Radical-Socialist elements were determined anti-Clerical generals should not be debarred. Judge of our astonishment when, on September 1, in the midst of the preparations for a supreme battle in France, while our own army at the Dardanelles was cut to the barest minimum in drafts and ammunition, the Admiralty suddenly received, through the French naval attaché, the request to assist the French Ministry of Marine in despatching from Marseilles four new French divisions to the Dardanelles! We were then informed that the French Government had decided to form a separate Army of the East, of six divisions, which, under the command of General Sarrail, would during the month of October land on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, and advance thence upon the forts of Chanak in conjunction with our renewed attacks upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. We were requested



to arrange for the relief of the two French divisions at Helles, in order that, added to the four new French divisions from France, this separate army should be constituted for the new operation. It appeared for a space that what the most unanswerable arguments of reason, of daring, and of duty could not achieve, were to be easily secured by the interplay of French political forces. For once the gloomy embarrassments of our councils were broken by the sunlight of a happy hour. We made haste to accept the French proposal. Lord Kitchener instantly promised the two divisions to relieve the French at Helles. Mr. Balfour began at once to gather the necessary transport. Mr. Bonar Law joined with me in pressing the despatch of still larger British forces, to 'make a good job of it.' Alas for the British Cabinet! They saw the truth quite clearly. They were sound and right in their general view. It was not through wrong judgment that they failed, but through want of will-power. In such times the Kingdom of Heaven can only be taken by storm.

But then the question arose, 'Was it possible General Joffre could have agreed?' Inquiry showed that he had agreed upon conditions. His own position was not so secure as to leave him indifferent to the pressure from the political left flank. He had been forced to manoeuvre. His conditions were that the reinforcing divisions for the Dardanelles were not to leave France before the main shock of his impending battle had occurred, nor until it could be seen whether its results would be decisive or not. Pressed on September 11, at Calais, by Lord Kitchener as to the time which it would take to ascertain this, he stated that he would know at the end of the first week's fighting one way or the other; that if it was clear by then that a general German retreat in the West—which would have to be followed up by every available man—was not going to be compelled, all the troops assigned to the Dardanelles would be released. October 10 was the date fixed for the embarkation of the leading divisions. It was noticed, however, that General Sarrail, instead of hurrying out to the Dardanelles to survey the situation on the spot and perfect his plans, as Lord Kitchener strongly pressed him to do, preferred to remain in Paris attending to matters which were doubtless of importance.

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I expressed myself on this situation as follows:—

*September 21, 1915.*

1. At present we are waiting for the result of the battle in France before coming to any decision about the Dardanelles. But surely we ought to make up our minds and make our

plans on the assumption that no fundamental change takes place on the French front: and all preliminary action necessary to another great effort at the Dardanelles ought to be taken. For instance: it is understood that Lord Kitchener and General Joffre propose that unless there is a decisive victory in France two British and four French divisions shall begin to embark about October 10 for the Dardanelles. We ought *now* to settle if this will be enough to ensure success, and we ought now to be preparing whatever more is needed. From October 10 to the middle of November all transports will be fully occupied in carrying the six above-mentioned Divisions. If more are needed, either they must start now, or else the new attack at the Dardanelles will have to wait three or four weeks more till they all arrive, thus pushing the operations into the third week of December. Owing to deep differences of opinion about whether the Dardanelles enterprise should be pushed through or abandoned, it is very difficult even to discuss these questions, and consequently when there is a fair excuse like the battle pending in France they are simply allowed to slumber. Meanwhile the vital days are slipping away.

2. It is imperative that we should come to a decision on the main issue, and thereafter act as a united body. Up to now the opposition to the enterprise has never been strong enough to prevent each step being taken, but the friction has been so great that each step has been taken too late. . . . Are we now going to do the same thing a fourth time on the largest scale of all?

3. By the 12th of August we knew that the Anzac-Suvla attack had not succeeded. It is now the 21st of September. About 50,000 drafts and reinforcements have been sent, i.e. not enough to make any difference, except for clinging on. Otherwise no action, no decision, no plan. Meanwhile the Turks are gathering their remaining strength, the Germans are threatening to march down, and the winter is approaching.

Of course the battle in France is at present the dominant factor. I do not attempt to go back on that. But I beseech my colleagues to take *now* all necessary decisions and all subsidiary and preliminary steps, so that when the result of the French offensive is manifest, action at the Dardanelles, if decided on, can proceed with the utmost speed and ample strength.

4. A plan should be made by the General Staff with estimates of all the troops, guns, and ammunition necessary to ensure success. A date should be fixed before the end of November by which all must be concentrated ready for attack. Everything should be worked up to that date, i.e. if necessary two

divisions should start from England now on the chance of the rest going later so as not to block the transports after the 10th of October. They can wait in Egypt and can come back if it is subsequently decided not to make another attempt. As the armies at the Dardanelles will be greatly increased and a new landing-place is probable, the additional small craft must be got ready and sent out. Not a day should be lost in this. Ammunition should be accumulated for a Dardanelles attack the moment the fate of the French offensive is decided. Unless all these plans are worked out *now* and the necessary steps taken, an immense delay will be caused when the final decision is taken.

Are we going to wait another three weeks before even beginning?

W. S. C.

The impossibility of procuring adequate supplies of high explosive shell in time for the battles on the Peninsula had led me during July and August to search for a substitute which could be quickly manufactured. I conceived that this would be provided by masses of bombs fired from the Stokes gun, which brilliant invention had been shown to Mr. Lloyd George and me in June, and of which the Minister of Munitions had, without reference to the War Office, already ordered a thousand.

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*September 24, 1915.*

I have for some time past been deeply impressed with the possibilities of attacking trenches at close quarters under cover and by means of hurricanes of vertically dropping bombs discharged from short-range engines; and after obtaining Lord Kitchener's approval, I have consulted with the various authorities concerned.

In the Stokes gun we have a weapon of extraordinary simplicity and cheapness, practically noiseless and flashless, and so light and mobile that it can be carried by one man. The two great advantages to be derived from this method of attack are: first, the intimacy of the support afforded to our assaulting infantry, as fire can be continued until they are within 50 yards of the enemy's trenches; secondly, the possibility of obtaining immense supplies of high-explosive bombs of simple manufacture far sooner than a proportionate delivery of much more complicated high-explosive artillery shell could be obtained.

All the ideas on which this scheme rests have come from officers who have been themselves constantly engaged in trench warfare. In order to give a fair chance to such a method of

attack, it is necessary that it should not be attempted until it can be applied on a very large scale. To send out these guns by scores and dozens and disperse them among infantry battalions in the trenches is not to give the plan a fair opportunity. What is necessary is a regular corps of trained men who have every necessary appliance, know exactly how to handle the weapons, and have thought out all the details of their combination. A thousand Stokes guns were ordered two months ago by the Minister of Munitions<sup>1</sup> on his own responsibility, and I believe it would be possible to bring 200 of them simultaneously into action, with a large supply of ammunition, about the middle of November next. This mode of attack would appear to be particularly suited to the Gallipoli Peninsula, as the 'up and down' nature of the country makes it almost impossible for artillery to search the ground thoroughly. The experiment should be tried on a great scale with 200 guns, either on the enemy's lines at Cape Helles or on his positions at Sari Bair.

W. S. C.

On September 20 the sinister news reached London that a Bulgarian mobilization was imminent and that Bulgaria was believed to have committed herself definitely to the Central Powers. On the next day the Bulgarian Prime Minister told a meeting of his followers that the cause of the Allies was lost; that Bulgaria must not attach herself to the losing side; that the Quadruple Alliance had only made vague proposals to Bulgaria about the occupation of the uncontested zone *after* the war; and that if Bulgaria went to war, she was assured of the neutrality of Roumania. At midnight on the 22nd, the Turks signed an agreement ceding the Dedeagatch Railway to Bulgaria; and that same day Serbia signalled with alarm the increasing movement of Austro-German forces towards her northern frontier. The long-dreaded southward thrust was about to begin.

It is significant that while Bulgaria had patiently awaited the result of the Battle of Suvla Bay before taking her ghastly plunge, her rulers did not hesitate to commit themselves on the eve of the far larger battle which was known to be impending in France. The Germans could not fail to note the massing of guns and troops in Artois and Champagne, and had in fact made all preparations to receive the shock. But their confidence in the result was shared by the Bulgarian General Staff.

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At dawn on September 26 the great battle in the West began. It comprised a subsidiary attack by about thirty British and

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George.

French Divisions at Loos, and a main attack by forty French divisions in Champagne. Sir John French had been compelled, in order to combine with the French, to accept a sphere of attack against his better judgment; but, having agreed to conform to General Joffre's plans, he threw himself into their execution with his customary determination. The French attack in Champagne has since been described as 'the unlimited method'—i.e. the armies were hurled on to advance as far as they could 'into the blue,' in the confident expectation that they would carry, not merely the front systems, which had been subjected to bombardment, but all intact positions and defences likely to be met with in rear. In the absurd misconceptions of the Staff, large masses of cavalry were brought up to press the victory to a decisive conclusion. At the fatal signal the brave armies marched into the firestorm. The ardour of the French infantry was not unmatched by their British comrades. The issue, however, was never in doubt. The German calculations of the strength of their front and of the numbers of troops needed to defend it were accurate and sound. Their drive against Russia, their project against the Balkans proceeded unchecked. In the first week the Anglo-French attack had secured slight advances of no strategic significance at various points, a few score of guns, and a few thousand prisoners, at the expense of more than 300,000 casualties.

The time had now come for General Joffre to release the troops for the East, but he was naturally reluctant to admit defeat. The downfall of his hopes was concealed by a continuance of the fighting, and the departure of the Dardanelles divisions receded week by week. Meanwhile, the winter season steadily approached the army on the Peninsula, and the catastrophe of the Balkans arrived.

On September 25 the general mobilization of the Bulgarian Army had begun. Those who placed reliance on the optimistic accounts of the fighting in France which were supplied by the military authorities here and in France found it impossible to believe that the Germans, faced by such formidable assaults in the West, and extended in immense operations in the East, could spare a new army to conquer Serbia, and they therefore continued incredulous to the last. During the third and fourth weeks of September the concentration of considerable Austro-German forces north of the Danube became unmistakable. On October 4 our Intelligence reported the presence of Mackensen at Temesvar. Belated and frantic efforts to deter the Bulgarians, exhausting the whole apparatus of promises and threats, were received with sullen impassivity, and the mobilization of the Bulgarian armies proceeded regularly. King Ferdinand pursued his profoundly considered and most perilous policy with

mechanical precision. An iron discipline gripped the peasant soldiers, and a ruthless suppression quelled the parliamentary forces. Serbia, unreasonable to the last, prepared to meet her doom with passionate appeals to her Allies and dauntless heroism in the field.

The repercussion of these events must now be studied. The only power which could come to the aid of Serbia before it was too late was Greece. Accordingly, at last, an earnest and united effort was made by all the Allies to procure the entry of Greece into the general war. Twice she had placed herself at their disposal. Twice she had been rebuffed. Now it was the turn of the Allies to ask. By treaty Greece was obliged to aid Serbia against a Bulgarian attack. King Constantine and the Greece that followed him claimed that this treaty did not apply to a war in which Serbia was attacked not only by Bulgaria but by a great Power. Serbia invoked the treaty, demanded the support of Greece, and also appealed to the Allies for 150,000 men. M. Venizelos, again Prime Minister and at the head of a parliamentary majority fresh from elections, urged the Allies to send troops to Salonika to enable Greece to enter the war according to her honourable obligations. As a military measure to aid Serbia directly, the landing at this juncture of allied forces at Salonika was absurd. The hostile armies concentrating on the eastern and northern frontiers of Serbia were certain to overwhelm and overrun that country before any effective aid, other than Greek aid, could possibly arrive. As a political move to encourage and determine the action of Greece, the despatch of allied troops to Salonika was justified. But the question arose: Where were the troops to come from? Obviously from the Dardanelles and only from the Dardanelles. A French and a British division, all that could be spared and all that could get to Salonika in time, were accordingly taken from Sir Ian Hamilton's hard-pressed army in the closing days of September.

The reader who has a true sense of the values in the problem will not be surprised to learn that this despatch of troops from the Dardanelles produced the opposite effect to that intended or desired. King Constantine had been trained all his life as a soldier. He had studied very closely the strategic situation of his country and conceived himself to be an authority on the subject. The road to his heart was through some sound military plan, and this he was never offered by the Allies. When he learned that the allied help was to take the form of withdrawing two divisions from the Dardanelles, he naturally concluded that that enterprise was about to be abandoned. He saw himself, if he entered the war, confronted after a short interval not only with the Bulgarians but with the main body of the Turkish Army

now chained to the Gallipoli Peninsula. He read in the British and French action a plain confession of impending failure in the main operation whose progress during the whole year had dominated the war situation in the East. It proved impossible to remove these anxieties from the Royal mind and added to his German sympathies they were decisive. 'His Majesty,' said Sir Francis Elliot [October 6], 'was disturbed by the fact that troops had been brought from the Dardanelles to Salonika. He thought that it was the beginning of the abandonment of the expedition and would release the whole Turkish Army to reinforce the Bulgarians.'

While the troops were already on the way and the British Navy were netting the harbour of Salonika against submarines, King Constantine dismissed M. Venizelos, on whose invitation they had come. The Allies therefore found themselves confronted with a pro-German Greece determined to repudiate its treaty obligations to Serbia. Thus the object of the expedition to Salonika had entirely disappeared. But those powerful persons in France and England who had advocated it were determined to persevere. The miseries of Serbia fighting desperately against superior forces, the shame and sorrow of watching a small ally trampled down, combined with dislike and weariness of the Dardanelles to form a tide of opinion impossible to resist. I continued to point to the Dardanelles as the master key to the problem, and to a naval attempt to force the Straits as the sole chance of changing the action of Bulgaria and averting the destruction of Serbia. Even up to the last moment the arrival of a British fleet in the Sea of Marmora might have transformed the situation. The Bulgarians, having mobilized against one side, might have marched against the other. On October 6, I made my last attempt with Mr. Balfour.

*Mr. Churchill to Mr. Balfour.*

*October 6, 1915.*

I must revert again to the question of the renewal of the naval attack on the Narrows. You should not overlook the fact that Admiral de Robeck is deeply committed against this by what has taken place, and his resolution and courage, which in other matters are beyond dispute, are in this case prejudiced by the line he has taken since the beginning. Could he have foreseen after the 18th [of March] the terrible course and vast expansion of the military operations, it is inconceivable that he would not have renewed the attack. But in those days the loss of four or five thousand men was the most that was expected and a swift victory was counted upon. Since then probably 150,000 French and British troops have been killed or wounded

on the Peninsula. The Admiral is therefore in a very difficult position. The naval attack is admittedly a great hazard. If it fails there is a heavy loss: if it succeeds he would be stultified. Is it not natural that in these circumstances his opposition to it should be deep-seated?

I notice the complaints which he makes about the steering capacity of the Monitors. If these are well founded, it would be necessary to use battleships. These could be protected against under-water damage by a variety of methods. The presence of even a few ships in the Marmora would absolutely cut off the Turkish Army and relieve us of all our difficulties. I believe we have been all these months in the position of the Spanish prisoner who languished for twenty years in a dungeon until one morning the idea struck him to push the door, which had been open all the time.

Mr. Balfour, however, although perfectly ready to bear the supreme responsibility if Admiral de Robeck and the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Jackson, had been willing to make the attempt, could not feel justified in overriding them or replacing them by others. It only remained, therefore, to await the catastrophe.

The Cabinet found the hopelessness of the situation unendurable, and apparently the French Government was similarly distressed. A vehement wish to rush troops to the aid of Serbia manifested itself. It was in vain that the impossibility of their arriving before it was too late was explained. On Friday, October 6, after heated and confused discussions, the Cabinet decided to refer the tangled situation to the considered judgment of the combined staffs of the Admiralty and the War Office. The great question—What to do? was accordingly remitted to the naval and military experts gathered together under the guidance of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the First Sea Lord. Through the whole of Saturday and Sunday these officers considered and prepared their report; and on Monday, October 9, this remarkable document was circulated to Ministers. The General Staff, in loyal accord with General Headquarters in France and with almost all orthodox military opinion, recommended that everything should be concentrated on the prolongation of the Battle of Loos, from which they considered decisive results might be obtained. In this they were proved wrong by the events not only of 1915, but of 1916 and of 1917. Although the British Army continued its operations with the fullest support and to the utmost limit of its ammunition, not only were they unable to break the German line but a very large proportion of their initial gains were wrested from them by the German counter-attacks. If Sir Douglas Haig with the



enormous expenditure of munitions and life which characterized the battles on the Somme in 1916 or at Passchendaele in 1917 was unable to achieve any decisive results, what chance had Sir John French with the scanty offensive resources of 1915? The best and most orthodox military opinion was at this time so far out of touch with reality, that the General Staff still contemplated the irruption of a mass of cavalry through the German line. What the cavalry would have done if they had got through was not explained.

But passing from the general question of the offensive in France to the specific issues raised by the situation in the East, the General Staff of the Army and the Admiralty War Staff pronounced in no uncertain tones against the Salonika enterprise and in favour of a continuance of the operations at the Dardanelles. The advocates of Salonika had been those who had pressed most strongly for the remission of the disputed questions to the unbiased and undiluted judgment of the naval and military experts. They were completely indisposed to accept the pronouncement of the tribunal to which they had appealed.

When these matters came before the War Council (whose numbers had now been increased to include the prominent figures on both sides of the controversy) on the evening of October 9, it was evident that no agreement could be reached as between Salonika and the Dardanelles. On the other hand, it was common ground that large reinforcements should be sent to the Eastern theatre as soon as possible. As these troop movements would necessarily take several weeks, and it could be plausibly argued that the situation would develop in the meanwhile in such a way as to make ultimate concord possible, it was finally settled that six divisions should be withdrawn from France and sent to Egypt, and that what should happen to them after that should be settled later. The Prime Minister felt himself constrained to agree to this arrangement. He was, in my opinion, throughout unwavering in his intention to persevere at the Dardanelles, and he used every resource of patience and tact to guide and carry opinion in that direction and to secure the necessary decisions at the earliest possible moment. A more vigorous course would probably have broken up the Government. I was, and am, strongly of opinion that it would have been much better to break up the Cabinet, and let one section or the other carry out their view in its integrity, than to preserve what was called 'the national unity' at the expense of vital executive action. But after that there would still have been the difficulty with the French.

The French Government had by this time made up their mind whole-heartedly in favour of Salonika. They declared their intention of sending General Sarrail's army thither instead of to

the Dardanelles, and urged us to support them as strongly as possible. Another series of disputes therefore broke out in the Cabinet upon the proposal to divert to Salonika the troops now under orders for Egypt, and the consequent abandonment of any further great enterprise to open the Straits. Military authority was again appealed to; and the General Staff in a paper, every word of which was justified by subsequent events, showed that there was no possibility of saving the Serbians, and that the Salonika enterprise was a dangerous and futile dissipation and misdirection of forces. Fortified by the unequivocal recommendation of all the military and naval authorities, the Cabinet refused to agree to the French proposals, and insisted upon the reinforcing British divisions being sent according to the agreement to Egypt, where they were to be fitted out with their semi-tropical equipment, etc. On this General Joffre was sent by the French Government over to England. After his defeat in Champagne he was in no position to resist the strong tendencies of his Government, nor possibly particularly anxious to keep General Sarrail in Paris. He arrived, and in the absence of the Prime Minister, who was at this time temporarily incapacitated by illness, met the leading members of the Cabinet. I was excluded from this Conference, no doubt because it was known that I should certainly prove intractable. After the Conference was over the Cabinet was informed that General Joffre had pledged his military judgment in favour of the necessity and practicability of the Salonika expedition, and had threatened to resign the command of the French armies if the British did not effectively co-operate. In spite of the strenuous resistance of the British General Staff, and in the flattest defiance of their advice, the Cabinet yielded to this outrageous threat.

The final policy of the British Government, though erroneous in direction and too late in time, was not without its grandeur. On October 12 the following declaration was made both to Roumania and to Greece:—

‘The only effective manner in which help can be given to Serbia is by the immediate declaration of war by Roumania and Greece against the Austro-Germans and Bulgaria. The British Government in that event would be prepared to sign forthwith a Military Convention with Roumania, whereby Great Britain will guarantee to bring into action in the Balkan theatre, not including the forces already in Gallipoli, an army of at least 200,000 men. If the French send a force as they contemplate doing, that force would be part of this total; but if not, the British Government would undertake to provide the whole number themselves.

'This force would include a number of our best and most seasoned divisions, and we shall maintain them in the field waging war on behalf of our Allies until the objective is accomplished. A steady flow of troops will commence as soon as transport is available and will be continuously maintained. We estimate that 150,000 men will be available by the end of November, and the total 200,000 will be reached by the end of the year.

'The Military Convention will state precisely the dates at which the different portions of the army will arrive. We are repeating this offer to Greece, and if Roumania is prepared to act immediately, we shall call upon Greece imperatively to fulfil her treaty obligations to Serbia.'

Such a spirit manifested three months earlier would have prevented the disasters by whose imminence it had been evoked. Such an army applied in August or September, either to the Gallipoli Peninsula or to the Asiatic shore, would have overpowered the Turks already extended at their fullest strain, and transformed defeat into victory throughout the East. But now these immense offers, not arising from foresight but extorted only by the pressure of events, fell upon deaf ears. Neither Roumania nor Greece would move an inch.

In these throes Sir Edward Carson resigned because of the failure to rescue Serbia, and M. Delcassé because of the attempt.

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On October 9 the storm of ruin burst upon the Balkans, and Mackensen, crossing the Danube with nine German and Austrian divisions, entered Belgrade from the north. Two days later the Bulgarians invaded Serbia from the east. This double and converging attack was overwhelming. Uskub fell on October 22, and Nish on November 2. In another month Monastir was captured, and by the middle of December the Serbian Army was destroyed or driven completely from Serbian soil.

The relentless severity of the Bulgarian pursuit exposed the retreating Serbian forces and population to the worst horrors of war and winter. Scores of thousands of defenceless people perished, and the whole country was ravaged and reduced to complete subjugation. Meanwhile, large Anglo-French forces began to accumulate at Salonika as helpless spectators of these events, the Allied Army on the Gallipoli Peninsula was left to rot, and the British Fleet at the Dardanelles remained motionless.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE ABANDONMENT OF THE DARDANELLES

Consequences—Pessimism—The Approaching Danger and its Limitations—Reflections—The Shadow of Evacuation—Obligations to Australia and New Zealand—Obligations to Russia—Superior Turkish Will-power—The Gas Question—Progress of the Evacuation Idea—Recall of Sir Ian Hamilton—General Monro's Report—Effect on Lord Kitchener—Admiral von Usedom's Report of October 31 to the German Emperor—The Plans of Commodore Keyes and Rear-Admiral Wemyss—Commodore Keyes returns to London—Outline of the Keyes Plan—The New War Committee—Its First Indecisions—Lord Kitchener's Mission—I Resign from the Government—Confusion and Difficulties of the Times—A General View.

THE events described in the last chapter led directly to the abandonment of the enterprise against the Dardanelles. In the first place, the impending opening of through communications between Germany and Turkey seemed to offer to the Turks the prospect of large supplies of all kinds and particularly of heavy guns and ammunition. Our troops on the Peninsula, whose positions did not allow of any local withdrawal, were threatened with a very great increase in the hostile bombardment. Secondly, the Salonika expedition must become a serious rival to the Dardanelles, drawing upon the existing strength of a harassed army and intercepting and diverting reinforcements and supplies. Apprehensions of approaching failure, if not indeed of final disaster, were rife.

I did what I could to stem the adverse movement in the Cabinet and correct extravagant pessimism.

*October 6, 1915.*

It is precipitately assumed that the establishment by the Germans of through communication with Constantinople and the consequent passage of ammunition, guns, etc., will render the position of our army in Gallipoli immediately untenable, and there is a tendency to jump to extreme conclusions without a detailed examination of all the intervening stages.

The first question is, Is a great Austro-German army going to strike South? When will this movement begin in force? When will the passage of the Danube take place? How long will it take after the Danube has been passed for the enemy to

establish rail or water communication with Widin or Sophia? What will be the weather conditions during these operations? When rail or river communication has been established, what proportion of the rolling stock of the railways concerned, particularly in the early stages of the operations, will be available after the needs of the supply of the Austro-German armies operating have been met, i.e., how many trains of Turkish ammunition a day can be passed through to Sophia and from Sophia on to Constantinople? What damage can be done to the railroad during the operations, and how long will that damage take to repair? What further enterprises can be directed against the railroad by aerial attack on bridges and trains? In this connection it should be noted that seaplanes operating in the Sea of Marmora and replenished by submarines have many important bridges and culverts on the approaches to Constantinople within easy radius of action. The number of anti-aircraft guns possessed in the initial stages by the Turks on these railway lines will not be large. Even a culvert blown up or a train derailed by bombing may be productive of two or three days' delay.

When Constantinople is reached, the ammunition has still to be transported to the Gallipoli Peninsula. No great quantity of it can be carried along the Bulair road. Almost the whole, particularly the heavy shells, must go by water across the Marmora. Hitherto, we have never had more than two submarines acting in the Marmora at one time, but the First Lord has informed us that nine large ones are available. It is a question whether these numbers should not be increased, in view of the great importance of their work. Submarines can operate for thirty days at a stretch in the Marmora, and therefore, if it were of great consequence to interrupt the supplies for a certain period, the whole force might be employed at once, probably resulting in the destruction by gunfire and torpedo of the bulk of the small craft engaged in the transmission of supplies. Seven or eight submarines operating at once ought to be able to establish an absolute blockade over the water exits from Constantinople. It is impossible to believe that with the resources at their disposal the Admiralty will fail to make the transportation of ammunition by water, if not impossible, at any rate precarious in the last degree, and accompanied throughout with an enormous proportion of loss. This applies with even more force to heavy guns than to ammunition, and particularly to the heavy classes of ammunition. At present the Turks have no large number of heavy guns in the Peninsula. In particular they have no large quantity of heavy howitzers, 6-inch, 8-inch, 9-inch, etc., similar to those employed in France in great masses.

The transportation of these classes of guns should be vigorously opposed. Aerial reconnaissance should detect their landing-places and the points on which they are to be mounted. A lengthy period may certainly be expected to lapse before any large addition to the enemy's heavy guns on the Peninsula can be made. With regard to the existing guns, it is argued that they will receive a more abundant supply, but it should be remembered that the fire of the Monitors has completely quelled the Asiatic batteries, which were at one time so grave an annoyance, and there is no reason why, with the floating artillery at our disposal, combined with good aerial work by observation and bombing, the guns should not be marked down and their service rendered perilous in the extreme, if indeed they are not in many cases destroyed. At every stage in this business we have great power of opposition to the enemy's intentions, and, if our resources are used with energy and resolution, there is no reason why the danger should not be kept within reasonable dimensions. . . .

But even if we are to expect that after some period in the latter part of November the artillery fire directed against our positions will increase in severity, that is no reason why our troops should not be able to maintain themselves. They now hold extensive lines more than fifteen miles in length, and the number of troops in any one area is not excessive. The broken character of the ground at Helles, and still more at Anzac, affords innumerable opportunities of securing effective defilade. The steep cliffs by the seashore afford the means of making completely secure underground barracks. Had the Germans held the positions we have been holding for all these months, a system of subterranean habitations, lighted by electric light, lined with concrete, and properly warmed and drained, would have been in existence. Even now there is time to make immense improvements, both in our trenches and in our resting accommodation. For the rest, the troops will bear the shell fire as well on the Gallipoli Peninsula as they have so long in the Ypres salient, where positions subject to every military vice and not less effectively commanded have been held month after month in spite of the fire of batteries incomparably heavier and more numerous, and far more abundantly supplied with ammunition, than anything we are likely to receive in the Gallipoli Peninsula for a long time to come.

The question of the beaches and the landing of supplies requires special consideration, as a great increase in the field gunfire would add to the many difficulties which exist at present. The use of properly devised smoke screens by day, and the full employment of the dark hours, should greatly mitigate this

menace. We have already more than thirty days' supplies for all the forces. The water difficulty is passing away with the summer, and if measures are taken with sufficient energy in the next month or six weeks much larger reserves should be accumulated under perfect underground cover in the cliffs' sides and the gulleys.

Whether it is desirable to leave an army of these dimensions indefinitely to waste by fire and sickness on the Gallipoli Peninsula without hope of an offensive or any plan to relieve it, is another question. But if it is decided to take that course, there is no reason at the present time to doubt our ability to maintain ourselves, in spite of losses, for an almost indefinite period.

When dangers are a long way off and it is desired to emphasize the need for immediate action, one is often led to speak of those dangers in exaggerated and too sweeping terms. For instance, the approach of the submarine was regarded by me with the utmost dread, and I had even gone so far as to write that their arrival would be fatal. In fact, however, when the danger came, it was successfully grappled with by the Admiralty and reduced to its proper dimensions. The landing and supply of far larger armies on the Gallipoli Peninsula has been successfully accomplished since the arrival of the German submarines than we had ever attempted beforehand. Our own resources grow with the resources of the enemy, and as the warfare in this theatre gets more thoroughly understood. We must not be in a hurry to yield to the prospect of dangers and difficulties which, when stoutly confronted, will not be found to contain any decisive element.

W. S. C.

On the same day (October 6) I circulated to the whole Cabinet my memorandum of July, predicting the Austro-German advance against Serbia. I added:—

. . . On August 12 Sir Ian Hamilton reported the failure of his attempt and asked for large reinforcements, and for drafts to raise his units to full strength. It is now October 6.

Nearly three months have passed since the plan of sending allied troops to the Vardar was favourably entertained by the Cabinet. But the four Powers were still corresponding on the point when the Bulgarian mobilization occurred. Every suggestion made by any one of them has been pulled to pieces by the others; and the obvious remedy for this state of things, viz., that we should send a person of the highest consequence as an envoy to the Balkans—so often urged—was never adopted.

In July we were assured that the Germans were about to begin a great offensive in the West, and were actually concen-

trating large armies for that purpose in the neighbourhood of Cologne. So far from this being true, it is we who have taken the offensive. The wise decisions of the Calais conference were thrown to the winds by the generals. Our action in the Balkans and at Gallipoli has been paralysed at the very moment when it was most urgent and would have been most fruitful. It will soon be possible to measure what we have gained instead in France, and what those gains have cost in life and limb.

When the new Government was formed the belief was widely held that some form of national service would be introduced. More than 4½ months have passed and the Cabinet has never yet ventured to discuss the subject. During the last two months our losses have greatly exceeded our recruiting, and the total of the British armies instead of growing has already begun rapidly to dwindle.

My object in now circulating this paper is not to make reproaches nor to boast superior foresight, but to implore my colleagues to rouse themselves to effective and energetic action before it is too late.

W. S. C.

On October 15 I dealt with the question of evacuation.

Nothing leads more surely to disaster than that a military plan should be pursued with crippled steps and in a lukewarm spirit in the face of continual nagging within the executive circle. Unfitly ought not to mean that a number of gentlemen are willing to sit together on condition either that the evil day of decision is postponed, or that not more than a half-decision should be provisionally adopted. Even in politics such methods are unhealthy. In war they are a crime. There is no disgrace in honest and loyal decisions, however the incalculable event may subsequently fall. Even withdrawals and capitulations if they are necessary should not be flinched from. But there would be enduring shame in impeding a decision, in hampering military action when it is decided on, in denying a fair chance to a warlike enterprise to which the troops have been committed, or in so acting, even unconsciously and unintentionally, that an executive stalemate is maintained until disaster supervenes. Every war decision must be forced to a clear-cut issue, and no thought of personal friendship or political unity can find any place in such a process. The soldiers who are ordered to their deaths have a right to a plan, as well as a cause.

I have done my utmost to co-operate with those who seek to bring effective aid to Serbia, and I believe that the gaining of Greece and Roumania to our side now is a more urgent



and a more important objective than forcing the Dardanelles—would indeed, if attained, carry the Dardanelles with it. But whether this plan will succeed will be settled in a few days. Then we must make up our minds one way or the other about Gallipoli, without compromise of any kind.

\* \* \* \* \*

Australia and New Zealand sent the first armies they have ever raised to fight against Germany in Europe. Without consultation with their Governments or Parliaments, these forces were sent by Lord Kitchener to the Gallipoli Peninsula. A greater mark of confidence in a single man has scarcely ever been shown. By feats of arms and military conduct of the highest order, they have seized and held at a cost of 30,000 men and cruel hardships a position close to the vitals of their enemy, from which, if properly sustained, it is probable that no force that can be brought to bear can move them. Anzac is the greatest word in the history of Australasia. Is it for ever to carry to future generations of Australians and New Zealanders memories of forlorn heroism and of sacrifices made in vain ? . . .

Russia has lost upwards of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  million men in this war, and has choked nearly a million Germans in her own blood. At the beginning of the war she sacrificed her armies in premature efforts to relieve the French and ourselves. Our operations in the West have totally failed to take any pressure off her during the last five months, when she has been exposed to the main offensive of the enemy. In spite of all her difficulties and deficiencies and losses absolutely beyond comparison, she continues to make head, most stubbornly and loyally, against the common enemy, and in her continuing to do so lies the hope of a successful issue from the war. The one great prize and reward which Russia can gain is Constantinople. The surest means of re-equipping her, the one way of encouraging her efforts, is the opening of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. With the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula that hope dies.

I do not dwell at length upon the military consequences. Turkey can be re-equipped by Germany, and the East will be thrown open to her. The Balkan Peninsula will be gone. Roumania will be permanently cut off from all allied munitions. Greece will be threatened by Turkish as well as Bulgarian armies. *Our interests in Egypt, our forces advancing to Bagdad, the Russians in the Caucasus, will soon feel the weight of the Turkish divisions now nailed precariously to the Gallipoli Peninsula. A larger number of soldiers will be required over longer periods of time to arrest the Turco-German efforts in wider and more remote theatres, once the*

*passage between Europe and Asia has been lost, than might now suffice to decide the whole matter in our favour.*<sup>1</sup>

History will no doubt also dwell on the extraordinary valour and tenacity of the Turkish resistance. When the secrets of all the General Staffs are revealed, we shall know how profound were the anxieties with which a renewal of the naval attack of the 18th March was regarded by the Turkish and German commanders. We shall realize the superb efforts by which Enver Pasha and General von Sanders sustained their army in spite of the utmost difficulty in obtaining food or ammunition; how they persevered in face of assaults which again and again were within an ace of succeeding, in spite of waves of despair which might at any moment have broken up their army, in the teeth of an enemy whose advance though slow had never been set back, with the sea and a capital starving into revolution at their backs, and with relief hoped for and counted on for months in vain. And the whole episode will stand as an example of the triumph of superior will-power over superior resources.

And on October 20:—<sup>2</sup>

More imminently dangerous than the arrival of German guns and ammunition at Constantinople is the arrival of large German gas installations. Some time ago our troops on the Peninsula were provided with the earlier patterns of respirators, but for three or four months this danger has receded, and it seems very probable that the respirators have deteriorated and that the men have not been practised in their use as are our troops in France. Unless these apprehensions are groundless, we ought without delay to send out a complete new outfit of the latest helmets and to make sure that during the period of inactivity while we are making up our minds the troops are duly practised in their use. This is a danger which can certainly be provided against if steps are taken now.

I trust that the unreasonable prejudice against the use by us of gas upon the Turks will now cease. The massacres by the Turks of Armenians and the fact that practically no British prisoners have been taken on the Peninsula, though there are many thousands of missing, should surely remove all false sentiment on this point, indulged in as it is only at the expense of our own men. Large installations of British gas should be sent out without delay. The winter season is frequently marked by south-westerly gales, which would afford a perfect opportunity for the employment of gas by us.

<sup>1</sup> The italics are new.

<sup>2</sup> Circulated the same day.

None of these recommendations produced any effective results. Our policy diverged increasingly from the conceptions I had formed of the conduct of the war. Only the fear of a massacre on the Beaches and of the loss of a large proportion of the Army delayed for a time the evacuation of Gallipoli and the abandonment of the enterprise. As a first step, on October 11, Lord Kitchener telegraphed to Sir Ian Hamilton:—

‘What is your estimate of the probable loss which would be entailed to our forces if the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula was decided upon and carried out in the most careful manner? No decision has been arrived at yet on this question of evacuation, but I feel I ought to have your views. In your reply you need not consider the possible future danger to the Empire which might be thus caused.’<sup>1</sup>

Sir Ian Hamilton, who had already declared evacuation to be ‘unthinkable,’ replied on the 12th that—

‘It would not be wise to reckon on getting out of Gallipoli with less loss than that of half the total force, as well as guns which must be used to the last, stores, railway plant, horses. . . We might be very lucky and lose considerably less than I have estimated.’

On October 14 it was decided to recall Sir Ian Hamilton and to send out in his place General Monro, an officer who had already commanded an army in France and was deeply imbued with Western ideas. He belonged to that school whose supreme conception of Great War strategy was ‘killing Germans.’ Anything that killed Germans was right. Anything that did not kill Germans was useless, even if it made other people kill them, and kill more of them, or terminated their power to kill us. To such minds the capture of Constantinople was an idle trophy, and the destruction of Turkey as a military factor, or the rallying of the Balkan States to the Allies, mere politics, which every military man should hold in proper scorn. The special outlook of General Monro was not known to the Cabinet. His instructions were moreover exclusively military. He was to express an opinion whether the Gallipoli Peninsula should be evacuated, or another attempt made to carry it; and on the number of troops that would be required (1) to carry the Peninsula, (2) to keep the Straits open, and (3) to take Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> No reference was made to any part which might be played by the Fleet in this essentially amphibious operation. Very large masses of troops were now moving from France to the Eastern theatre, and the whole question

<sup>1</sup> *Gallipoli Diary*, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> General Sir C. C. Monro's Despatch, *London Gazette*.

of their employment was left open. In these circumstances General Monro's report was awaited with the utmost anxiety.

There was however no need for suspense. General Monro was an officer of swift decision. He came, he saw, he capitulated. He reached the Dardanelles on October 28; and already on the 29th he and his staff were discussing nothing but evacuation. On the 30th he landed on the Peninsula. Without going beyond the Beaches, he familiarized himself in the space of six hours with the conditions prevailing on the 15-mile front of Anzac, Suvla and Helles, and spoke a few discouraging words to the principal officers at each point. To the Divisional Commanders summoned to meet him at their respective Corps Headquarters, he put separately and in turn a question in the following sense: 'On the supposition that you are going to get no more drafts can you maintain your position in spite of the arrival of strong reinforcements with heavy guns and limitless German ammunition?' He thus collected a number of dubious answers, armed with which he returned to Imbros. He never again set foot on the Peninsula during the tenure of his command. His Chief-of-the-Staff, also an enthusiast for evacuation, never visited it at all. On October 31 General Monro despatched his telegram recommending the total evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the final abandonment of the campaign. According to his own statements he contemplated, in addition to the ruin of the whole enterprise, a loss of from thirty to forty per cent. of the Army, i.e., about forty thousand officers and men. This he was prepared to accept. Two days later he left for Egypt, leaving the command of the Dardanelles Army temporarily in the hands of General Birdwood.

General Monro's telegram of 'Evacuation' fell like a thunderbolt upon Lord Kitchener; and for the moment and under the shock he rose in all the strength which he commanded when he represented the indomitable core of our national character.

*Lord Kitchener to General Birdwood.*

*November 3, 1915.*

'Very secret.

'You know the report sent in by Monro. I shall come out to you; am leaving to-morrow night. I have seen Captain Keyes, and I believe the Admiralty will agree to making naval attempt to force the passage of the Straits. We must do what we can to assist them, and I think that as soon as our ships are in the Sea of Marmora we should seize the Bulair isthmus and hold it so as to supply the Navy if the Turks still hold out.

'Examine very carefully the best position for landing near the marsh at the head of the Gulf of Xeros, so that we could get a line across the isthmus, with ships at both sides. In order

to find the troops for this undertaking we should have to reduce the numbers in the trenches to the lowest possible, and perhaps evacuate positions at Suvla. All the best fighting men that could be spared, including your boys from Anzac and every one I can sweep up in Egypt, might be concentrated at Mudros ready for this enterprise.

'There will probably be a change in the naval command, Wemyss being appointed in command to carry through the naval part of the work.

'As regards the military command, you would have the whole force, and should carefully select your commanders and troops. I would suggest Maude, Fanshawe, Marshall, Peyton, Godley, Cox, leaving others to hold the lines. Please work out plans for this, or alternative plans as you may think best. We must do it right this time.

'I absolutely refuse to sign orders for evacuation, which I think would be the gravest disaster and would condemn a large percentage of our men to death or imprisonment.

'Monro will be appointed to the command of the Salonika force.'

Here was the true Kitchener. Here in this flaming telegram—whether Bulair was the best place or not—was the Man the British Empire believed him to be, in whom millions set their faith—resolute, self-reliant, creative, lion-hearted.

Unhappily the next day:—

*Lord Kitchener to General Birdwood.*

*November 4, 1915.*

'I am coming as arranged. . . . The more I look at the problem the less I see my way through, so you had better work out very quietly and secretly any scheme for getting the troops off the peninsula.'

\* \* \* \* \*

We may now once again exercise our privilege of crossing to the enemy's lines and of learning how the situation was viewed by the responsible German authorities. On the same October 31 that General Monro despatched his telegram of evacuation to Lord Kitchener, Admiral von Usedom who, it will be remembered, commanded the fortress of the Dardanelles and all the marine defences of the Straits, completed a despatch to the Emperor dealing with the events of the past month.

'The great attack,' he wrote, 'which we have been expecting on the land front has not taken place since the advance inaugurated by the new landing on August 7 north of the Ariburnu front was brought to a standstill. At the end of

September reports of moves of troops and vehicles increased. Information from Salonika confirms that troops are being drawn thither from the Dardanelles front. I do not, however, consider it probable that the enemy will evacuate his position without hard fighting. In order to drive him out a very thorough artillery preparation is necessary, and for this the munitions on the spot or which can be brought up are insufficient.'

He proceeded to dwell upon the dangerous manner in which the fortress defences of the Straits had been weakened through the repeated withdrawals of the mobile artillery, particularly the howitzers, on which his whole system depended. In addition to the forty-nine howitzers and mobile guns with their supplies of ammunition withdrawn in May and June, he had during August and September been forced to cede another twenty-one of his most valuable howitzers and mobile guns. The whole of the vital Intermediate Defences of the forts contained at this time only twenty mobile howitzers and mortars. To quote Admiral von Usedom:—

'Owing to the transfer of the eight 6-inch howitzers and three 8.2-inch mortars, there remained only in fortress "D" of high-angle guns the following:—

- (1) On the European side: One 6-inch howitzer battery of four howitzers.  
No mortar batteries.
- (2) On the Asiatic coast: Three 6-inch howitzer batteries, each of four howitzers.  
One 8.4-inch howitzer battery of six mortars.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile Commodore Keyes, Chief of the Staff to Admiral de Robeck, could endure the position at the Dardanelles no longer. He had been throughout convinced that the Fleet could at any time with proper preparation force the Dardanelles and enter the Marmora in sufficient strength. During the summer detailed plans for this operation were prepared under his direction by the Naval Staff. These plans were now completed, and Commodore Keyes declared himself confident of their success. In this opinion he was most strongly supported by Rear-Admiral Wemyss. This officer was actually senior to Admiral de Robeck, but in circumstances which have already been explained<sup>1</sup> he had accepted the position of Second-in-Command upon the eve of the action of March 18. The qualities of character and judgment

<sup>1</sup> See page 636, Volume I.

which he displayed during the war were destined to raise him from a Rear-Admiral to the position of First Sea Lord. In this supreme capacity he was eventually to sustain the burden of the last fourteen months of the struggle. His opinion therefore is retrospectively invested with very high authority. The joint representations of the Chief of Staff and of his Second-in-Command were not, however, acceptable to Admiral de Robeck. Commodore Keyes thereupon asked to be relieved of his appointment in order that he might return home and lay his plans before the Board of Admiralty. Admiral de Robeck, with a magnanimous gesture, asked him to retain his position and accorded him leave of absence, full liberty and 'a fair field' to state his case, making it clear, however, that he could not himself in any circumstances become responsible for a further naval attempt. Commodore Keyes therefore repaired to London forthwith, where he arrived on October 28.

The Keyes plan was remarkable for its audacity. It discarded all the gradual methods around which it had alone been possible hitherto to rally naval opinion. The Fleet would be divided into four squadrons, three of which were to take part in the attack, while the fourth provided the support for the Army. The Second Squadron comprised about eight old battleships and cruisers, four very old battleships acting as supply ships, as many of the dummy battleships as possible, and a number of merchantmen carrying coal and ammunition. All these vessels were to be fitted with mine-bumpers. Preceded by four of the best sweepers and accompanied by eight destroyers and two scouts, this Second Squadron was to enter the Straits shortly before dawn, keeping below the illuminated area until dawn was about to break, when it would proceed to steam through the Narrows at its utmost speed. Commodore Keyes proposed to take command of this squadron himself. It was his firm conviction that with the improved sweepers and the mine-bumpers, and aided by smoke screens, darkness and surprise, certainly more than half of this squadron would arrive above Nagara. The battleships which survived were immediately to attack the forts of the Narrows from their rear, which would have been completely exposed.

Meanwhile at dawn the First Squadron, composed of the *Lord Nelson*, *Agamemnon*, *Exmouth*, two *King Edwards*, four French ships, the *Glory* and the *Canopus*, accompanied by eight sloops and ten destroyers for sweeping, would simultaneously attack the forts at the Narrows from below the Kephez minefield. The Third Squadron, consisting of two Monitors, the *Swiftsure*, and five cruisers or light cruisers, was to cover the Army and co-operate from across the Peninsula in the attack upon the forts at the Narrows. The bombardment of the forts at the Narrows

by all three squadrons, and the sweeping of the minefields already deranged by the passage of the Second Squadron, were to be pursued continuously without slackening for a moment. An elaborate memorandum had been prepared by the staff, regulating every phase of this main attack which might well have been continued for two or even three days if necessary before the final advance of the First Squadron through the Narrows was ordered. In short, the Keyes plan was in principle the old plan of pinning down the forts in close and continuous action while the minefields were swept, but in addition it was to be preceded by a furious surprise rush of the oldest vessels to dislocate the defence, to sweep and break up the minefields and secure positions whence the forts could be taken in reverse. 'The action recommended (in the staff memorandum),' wrote Commodore Keyes, 'taken in conjunction with the preliminary rush and determined military offensive, generally represents the views of a number of experienced officers who strongly advocate a naval attack on the Straits and are confident of success. If success is achieved, the Turkish Army in Gallipoli will be entirely dependent on the Bulair Isthmus for supplies. This line of communication can be harassed day and night.' Finally the plan comprised detailed arrangements for maintaining the successful ships in the Marmora while they were operating against the Turkish communications.

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On November 2 the Prime Minister reconstituted the War Council or Dardanelles Committee as it had hitherto been styled. In its new form it was called the 'War Committee' and was limited to the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, Lord Kitchener, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Bonar Law was added ten days later under Conservative pressure. I was excluded. It was announced that this Committee would be responsible to the Cabinet for the whole direction of the war. On November 3 the new Committee met to consider the question of evacuating the Dardanelles. Lord Kitchener's views have been fully exposed in his telegram to General Birdwood of that day. He had previously telegraphed to General Monro asking whether his opinions were shared by the Corps Commanders on the Peninsula. He had been answered that General Byng favoured evacuation and considered that Suvla could be evacuated without much loss, provided the attempt were made before German reinforcements arrived; that General Davies, commanding at Helles, concurred with General Monro; but that General Birdwood at Anzac was opposed to evacuation. General Maxwell, commanding in Egypt, had also independently telegraphed



urging that a further effort should be made to hold on. Thus the military opinions were divided. The Committee had also before them the plans of Commodore Keyes, endorsed by Admiral Wemyss, in regard to which the Admiralty War Staff had pronounced no decided opinion. Keyes was still only a Captain with the rank of Commodore. He was known as a daring and gifted officer, but he had no record of high command behind him, and he did not carry the authority necessary to override Admiral de Robeck's negative view. Could he at this juncture, with the fame of the leader of the Dover patrol, have laid upon the Council Table the credentials of Zeebrugge, the history of the Great War might have been much curtailed.

In the circumstances which existed the new War Committee found no difficulty in deciding to postpone the evil day of decision. Lord Kitchener proceeded to the Dardanelles to survey the situation on the spot and make further recommendations. The Secretary of State left London on November 4, apparently in great sympathy with Commodore Keyes's plan. He spoke on his way through Paris in an exceedingly resolute manner, and directed Commodore Keyes to explain the scheme to the French Minister of Marine, now Admiral Lacaze, and then follow him with all speed. Admiral Lacaze was wholly favourable to the plan, and immediately promised a reinforcement of six old French battleships to execute it.

Lord Kitchener arrived at the Dardanelles on November 9. His personal inspection of the troops and the defences convinced him that the troops could hold their positions unless confronted with very heavy German reinforcements of which there was no immediate prospect. His conferences with Admiral de Robeck led him however, in the absence of Commodore Keyes, to discard the idea of a renewed naval attempt. Instead he devised a plan for a new landing at Ayas in the Gulf of Alexandretta, with the double object of barring the path of a Turkish invasion of Egypt and of covering the effects of an impending withdrawal from Gallipoli. This plan did not commend itself either to the Admiralty or to the War Committee. With Salonika as well as the Dardanelles on their hands, they were naturally reluctant to commit themselves to another new and entirely separate enterprise which could at the best only achieve subsidiary objects. They therefore informed Lord Kitchener of their dissent from his views and announced that they had decided that the final decision about Gallipoli was to be relegated to a Conference to be held in Paris a few days later.

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In accepting an office in the new Government after leaving

the Admiralty at the end of May, I had been actuated by the feeling that it was my duty to sustain the Dardanelles enterprise to the best of my ability, and by the hope that with a seat on the War Council I should be able to do so. It was on this condition alone that I had found it possible to occupy a sinecure office. That condition had now disappeared. I was out of harmony with the views which were prevailing and to which the Prime Minister had at last submitted. I was also distressed at the methods of indecision arising from conflicting opinions which at this time pervaded and paralysed the conduct of the war. The rejection of the plans of Commodore Keyes and Admiral Wemyss filled me with despair. I was convinced that the evacuation of Gallipoli was intended and must follow as a consequence of what had taken place.

Awful as were the risks of this decision, it was inevitable unless further efforts on a great scale were to be made by sea or land. Even evacuation was better than leaving the Army to moulder piecemeal without support or purpose. If a British Cabinet or Admiralty were unable to face the responsibility of a naval attempt, there was still time for further military efforts. The important new armies gathering in the Near East, in Egypt and at Salonika, could have been landed at Besika Bay to advance along the Asiatic shore, or alternatively at some point in the Gulf of Xeros to cut the Isthmus of Bulair. Both these operations would have required a large number of additional small vessels—trawlers, lighters, beetles, etc.—but either could have been carried out before the position of the Allied Army holding the Gallipoli Peninsula became untenable through the arrival of great supplies of German artillery and ammunition. In neither case had the Turks sufficient reserves available to meet the new invasion. In both cases victory would have carried with it the destruction or capture of the whole Turkish Army of twenty divisions now concentrated on the Gallipoli Peninsula and the consequent liberation as a new factor of our own fourteen divisions. Bulgaria had joined our enemies; Serbia was overrun. But Greece and Roumania could still have been gained; Constantinople could still have been taken; communications could still have been reopened with Russia; and Turkey would have been driven out of Europe, if not indeed altogether out of the war.

But it would have been useless to advocate such a policy in the teeth of the opinions which were now prevailing, even had I been accorded a seat on the War Committee. It was better that other schemes of strategic and political thought now dominant should have their chance and be applied in their integrity by those who believed in them. I knew too much and felt too keenly to be able to accept Cabinet responsibility for what I believed to be a wholly

erroneous conception of war. I therefore in the middle of November sought permission to retire from the Government.

It was impossible at that time to discuss in Parliament any of the grave and tormenting controversies which these pages expose. I had nothing but the friendliest personal feelings towards my colleagues and the Prime Minister, and I would not speak a word which might add to their difficulties or those of the State. I was content to base myself upon a desire to relinquish a well-paid sinecure office which I could not bear longer to hold at this sad juncture in our affairs.

I have tried to show what I believe to be the interplay of forces and sequence of events in this tragedy. Masses of documents can be produced which illustrate and elaborate all the phases of the story, and there are many minor episodes which it would have been only confusing to include. But from what has been written, the appalling difficulties and cruel embarrassments of those who, whatever their views, were endeavouring loyally and earnestly to discharge their great responsibilities can be readily understood. I have recorded my counsels at the time. The future was then unknown. No one possessed plenary power. The experts were frequently wrong. The politicians were frequently right. The wishes of foreign Governments, themselves convulsed internally by difficulties the counterpart of our own, were constantly thrusting themselves athwart our policy. Without the title deeds of positive achievement no one had the power to give clear brutal orders which would command unquestioning respect. Power was widely disseminated among the many important personages who in this period formed the governing instrument. Knowledge was very unequally shared. Innumerable arguments of a partial character could be quoted on every side of all these complicated questions. The situation itself was in constant and violent movement. We never at any time regained the initiative; we were always compelled to adapt ourselves to events. We could never overtake or forestall them. All the time, clear and simple solutions existed which would speedily have produced the precious element of victory.

I may perhaps close this chapter by reprinting some words of general import which I used in explaining my resignation to the House of Commons:—

There is no reason to be discouraged about the progress of the war. We are passing through a bad time now, and it will probably be worse before it is better, but that it will be better, if we only endure and persevere, I have no doubt whatever. The old wars were decided by their episodes rather than by their tendencies. In this war the tendencies are far more

important than the episodes. Without winning any sensational victories we may win this war. We may win it even during a continuance of extremely disappointing and vexatious events. It is not necessary for us in order to win the war to push the German lines back over all the territory they have absorbed, or to pierce them. While the German lines extend far beyond her frontiers, and while her flag flies over conquered capitals and subjugated provinces, while all the appearances of military success attend her arms, Germany may be defeated more fatally in the second or third year of the war than if the Allied Armies had entered Berlin in the first.

. . . It is, no doubt, disconcerting for us to observe that the Government of a State like Bulgaria are convinced on an impartial survey of the chances that victory will rest with the Central Powers. All the small States are hypnotized by German military pomp and precision. They see the glitter, the episode, but they do not see or realize the capacity of the ancient and mighty nations, against whom Germany is warring, to endure adversity, to put up with disappointments and mismanagement, to recreate and renew their strength, and to pass on with boundless obstinacy through boundless sufferings to the achievement of their cause.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF 1915

A Reflection—Final Stages at Gallipoli—Admiral Wemyss's Effort—Straits of the Turks—Final Decision to Evacuate—Admiral Wemyss's Telegram of December 8—Final Admiralty Veto—The Evacuation—Consequences—The Revival of Turkey—Dissipation of Allied Forces—Russia—Roumania—Two Schools of Naval Thought—A Period of Naval Inertia—The Awakening—The Defensive Spirit—The War of Exhaustion—The Chain of Fate.

THE closing scenes at the Dardanelles proceeded while I was serving with the 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards near Laventie. I was not without information on the course of affairs from my friends both in the Cabinet and at General Headquarters. It was a comfort to be with these fine troops at such a time, to study their methods, unsurpassed in the Army, of discipline and trench warfare, and to share from day to day their life under the hard conditions of the winter and the fire of the enemy. The kindness with which I was received during my period of instruction with the Guards Division will ever be gratefully remembered by me. As in the shades of a November evening, I for the first time led a platoon of Grenadiers across the sopping fields which gave access to our trenches, while here and there the bright flashes of the guns or the occasional whistle of a random bullet accompanied our path, the conviction came into my mind with absolute assurance that the simple soldiers and their regimental officers, armed with their cause, would by their virtues in the end retrieve the mistakes and ignorances of Staffs and Cabinets, of Admirals, Generals and politicians—including, no doubt, many of my own. But, alas, at what a needless cost! To how many slaughters, through what endless months of fortitude and privation would these men, themselves already the survivors of many a bloody day, be made to plod before victory was won!

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On November 22, Lord Kitchener, his Ayas bay project being vetoed, consented to the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac. He still hoped to save Helles, the retention of which was strongly advocated by Admiral de Robeck. The War Committee, however, decided that all three lodgments should be abandoned.

With this decision Admiral de Robeck expressed himself in discord. He deprecated the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac, and when asked specifically on November 25 if he concurred in the evacuation of Helles, he observed bluntly that 'he could not understand it.' The situation cannot, however, be disentangled from his attitude towards the use of the Fleet. His health was now temporarily impaired by his long spell of hard work. He started immediately for home on a period of leave.

The command now devolved upon Admiral Wemyss. The new Naval Commander-in-Chief, undeterred by past events, bent himself to a last effort to retrieve the situation. In a series of telegrams, he emphasized the dangers of a winter evacuation. He dwelt upon its difficulties; he endorsed the estimate of General Monro that 30 per cent. of the force would be lost in evacuation; he urged that one more effort should be made to convert defeat into victory. In a spirit which cannot be censured in the Royal Navy, he asserted that the Fleet would do its part, and that even if the Army could not co-operate, he would carry out the Keyes plan and force the Dardanelles by naval power alone.

These stalwart counsels threw everything again into the melting pot. The Cabinet revolted against the decision of their new War Committee. It was resolved that no decision could be taken without a further conference with the French, and a meeting of the new Allied Standing Council was fixed for December 5 at Calais. Lord Kitchener again took heart. In common with the British General Staff he was strongly opposed to the whole Salonika expedition. On December 2 he telegraphed to General Monro:—

*Private and Secret.*

The Cabinet has been considering the Gallipoli situation all day. Owing to the political consequences, there is a strong feeling against evacuation, even of a partial character. It is the general opinion we should retain Cape Helles.

If the Salonika troops are placed at your disposal up to four divisions for an offensive operation to improve the position at Suvla, could such operations be carried out in time with a view to making Suvla retainable, by obtaining higher position and greater depth? The Navy will also take the offensive in co-operation.

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Meanwhile the activities of the British submarines in the Marmora had almost entirely severed the sea communications of the Turkish Army, and were also impeding their supply by the roads along the Marmora shore. To meet this peril, which had

been approaching plainly, steadily and rapidly during the last two or three months, the German Staff had built a new branch railway from the main Turkish system to Kavak at the head of the Gulf of Xeros. This had been finished in the nick of time, and as the sea transport failed, it became the sole line of supply, relief or reinforcement for the twenty Turkish divisions on the Peninsula. From the new railhead at Kavak all transport was by bullock wagon or camel along roads across the Bulair Isthmus which were frequently disturbed by the fire of the Fleet. On December 2, Admiral Wemyss succeeded in destroying the three central spans of the Kavak Bridge by fire from the *Agamemnon*, *Endymion*, and a Monitor. The road was also so badly broken by the bombardment that wheeled traffic was completely interrupted. The Turkish 5th Army was now in serious straits. The British Intelligence reported growing demoralization of the enemy through losses, disease, stringency of supplies, the severe weather, and the increasingly searching character of the naval fire. We now know that these reports were correct. Food, clothes, boots, ammunition were frightfully scarce. The condition of the Turkish soldiers, often bare-footed, ragged, hungry, clinging to their trenches week after week, excited at this time the sympathy as well as the alarm of their German masters. Count Metternich, then German Ambassador at Constantinople, visited the Turkish lines on the Peninsula in December in company with Liman von Sanders. 'If you had only known,' he said, discussing these events after the war, 'what the state of the Turkish Army was, it would have gone hard with us.' It was not, however, knowledge that was lacking, but the collective will-power to turn it to account.

Admiral Wemyss and his staff were now confident that they had the power, even without forcing the Straits, not only to prevent the arrival of German artillery reinforcements on a large scale, but also gravely to compromise the existence of the whole Turkish Army on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Thus on the spot hope flared up again. It was at this moment, when for the first time a strong and competent naval command declared itself positive of success, that the improvident decision to evacuate was finally taken. On December 8 the Joint Staff Conference sitting at the French General Headquarters declared unanimously for the immediate organization of the defence of Salonika and for the immediate evacuation of Gallipoli. From this moment the perplexities of the British Government came to an end. Henceforward they remained steadfast in pusillanimous resolve. Admiral Wemyss, however, with Keyes at his side, did not readily yield; and the struggle of these two sailors against the now marshalled force of the Cabinet, the War Committee, the Joint Anglo-French Conference, the Admiralty and the War Office,

constitutes an episode on which perhaps in future years British naval historians will be glad to dwell. His telegram of December 8 at least must in justice to the Royal Navy be reprinted here:—

‘The Navy is prepared to force the Straits and control them for an indefinite period, cutting off all Turkish supplies which now find their way to the Peninsula either by sea from the Marmora or across the Dardanelles from Asiatic to European shore. The only line of communications left would be the road along the Isthmus of Bulair, which can be controlled almost entirely from the Sea of Marmora and the Gulf of Xeros. What is offered the Army, therefore, is the practical, complete severance of all Turkish lines of communication, accompanied by the destruction of the large supply depots on the shore of the Dardanelles.

‘In the first instance I strongly advocated that the naval attack should synchronize with an army offensive, and if the Army will be prepared to attack in the event of a favourable opportunity presenting itself, nothing more need be required of them. The Navy here is prepared to undertake this operation with every assurance of success. If the units as described in your letter of November 24 can be provided, these hopes of success are greatly increased, and the possible losses greatly diminished.

‘The unanimous military opinion referred to in Admiralty telegram No. 422 has, I feel certain, been greatly influenced, and naturally so, by the military appreciations of Sir Charles Monro. These I have not seen, but their purport I have gathered in course of conversations. The Corps Commanders, I know, view the evacuation with the greatest misgiving. The forcing of the Dardanelles, as outlined in my telegrams, has never been put before them, and I am convinced that, after considering the certain results which would follow a naval success, they would favour an attack on the lines indicated, especially in view of the undoubted low morale of the Turkish Peninsular army, of which we have ample evidence.

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‘The very extensive German propaganda being pursued all over the Near East, accompanied by the expenditure of vast sums of money, is not, I feel convinced, being undertaken merely as a side issue to the European war.

‘A position of stalemate on both fronts of the principal theatres of war appears the natural outcome of present situation. This opinion is freely expressed in the higher military circles in Greece, and would therefore appear to be fostered by the Germans—a significant point.



'By surrendering our position here, when within sight of victory, we are aiding enemy to obtain markets the possession of which may enable her to outlast the Allies in the war of exhaustion now commencing.

'A successful attack would once and for all disperse those clouds of doubt, a large amount of shipping would be released, and the question of Greece and Egypt settled.

'I do not know what has been decided about Constantinople, but if the Turks could be told that we were in the Marmora to prevent its occupation by the Germans, such a course would inevitably lead to disruption, and therefore weakness amongst them.

'I fear the effect on the Navy would be bad.

'Although no word of attack has passed my lips except to my immediate staff and admirals, I feel sure that every officer and man would feel that the campaign had been abandoned without sufficient use having been made of our greatest force, viz., the Navy.

'The position is so critical that there is no time for standing on ceremony, and I suggest that General Birdwood, the officer who would now have to carry out the attack or evacuation which is now ordered, be asked for his appreciation.

'The logical conclusion, therefore, is the choice of evacuation or forcing the Straits. I consider the former disastrous tactically and strategically, and the latter feasible, and, so long as troops remain at Anzac, decisive.

'I am convinced that the time is ripe for a vigorous offensive, and I am confident of success.'

On August 18 the Admiralty had telegraphed to Admiral de Robeck authorizing and implicitly urging him to use the old battleships of the Fleet to force the Dardanelles, and Admiral de Robeck had declined. When the Admiralty was willing the Admiral was unwilling. Now the conditions were reversed. On December 10 the same Board of Admiralty replied that they were not prepared to authorize the attempt by the Navy single-handed to force the Narrows. This sombre veto was final.

The risks that men are prepared to run in relation to circumstances present some of the strangest manifestations of psychology. One tithe of the hardihood they display to escape disaster, would often certainly achieve success. Contrast, for instance, the alternative hazards now presented to the British Government and Admiralty: on the one hand, the chance, even the probability according to all expert opinion, of losing 40,000 men in an evacuation, which if successful could only result in the total loss of the campaign; on the other, the chance of losing a squadron of old

ships, and a small number of men in an operation which if successful would carry the campaign at a stroke from disaster to triumph. Yet we see Cabinet and Admiralty able to face the first alternative, and shrink from the second. While time is young, while prospects are favourable, while prizes inestimable may be gained, caution, hesitancy, half measures rule and fetter action. The grim afternoon of adverse struggle alone brings the hour of desperate resolve. The hopeful positive is rejected while all may be gained; the awful negative is embraced when nought but escape remains in view; and the energy and conviction which might have commanded victory are lavished upon the mere processes of flight.

The determination of the British Government to give in at all costs was now inflexible. The orders for the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac were reiterated by the Admiralty. On December 12, Admiral Wemyss bowed to these orders 'with the greatest regret and misgiving.' The plan for the evacuation, upon which a month's careful labour had been expended, was now completed, and the Admiral fixed the night of December 19 or 20 as the date of the operation.

Hope died hard. In ordering the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac the Government had consented to the retention for the time being of Helles which, while it was held, kept open the possibility of a renewed naval attack. In order to make Helles secure, the Admiral, in full accord with General Davies, commanding at Helles, elaborated plans for a combined attack by the Fleet and Army upon Achi Baba. The control and direction of the naval fire from the Monitors and the bulged 'Edgars' had now been brought to a very high degree of efficiency. 'Co-operation in an attack,' wrote General Davies, 'has now become a practical reality.' Both the naval and military Commanders on the spot were therefore in complete agreement. It is not necessary to pronounce upon the prospects of such an operation, for at this moment General Monro returned from Salonika where after his one day's visit to the Peninsula and his sojourn in Egypt he had been residing. Already on December 1 he had forbidden General Birdwood and the Corps Commanders to confer with the Admiral without his permission. On the 10th he peremptorily forbade General Birdwood to discuss any military matter with the Admiral. On the 14th he telegraphed home dissociating himself from the Admiral's views and protesting against any expression of opinion by Admiral Wemyss upon military matters. He agreed, however, with the naval and local military view that Helles could not be held indefinitely without Achi Baba. Thus at last, since the capture of Achi Baba was deemed impossible, the decision was reached for the total evacuation of the Peninsula.

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It was with melancholy but intense relief that I learned in France of the successful and bloodless execution of this critical operation which was accomplished on the night of December 19. *The utmost credit belongs to the naval and military officers who perfected in exact detail the arrangements, and to the Admirals and Generals by whom they were so successfully carried out.* The weather, on which all depended, was favourable for exactly the vital forty-eight hours, and the Turks were utterly unsuspecting. Indeed, when dawn broke on empty trenches and famous positions, bought at so terrible a cost, now silent as the graves with which they were surrounded, the haggard Turkish soldiers and their undaunted chiefs could hardly believe their eyes. Their position, and that of their country whose capital they had defended with soldierly tenacity, were now translated at a stroke from extreme jeopardy into renewed and resuscitated power. Conviction, determination and the will to win, steadfastly maintained by their High Command, had brought victory to the defence in spite of their inferiority in numbers and in resources of all kinds and of the inherent strategic perils of their position. The lack of these qualities on our side at the summit of power had defrauded the attackers of the reward, pregnant in its consequences to the whole world, to which their overwhelming potential, strength and resources, their actual numbers and apparatus, their daring, their devotion and their fearful sacrifices had given them the right.

*The evacuation of Helles was performed with equal skill and with equal good fortune on January 8, and the story of the Dardanelles came finally to an end.* This consummation was acclaimed by the shallow and the uninstructed as if it had been a victory.

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It is necessary, however, not only to relate the immediate sequel, but to outline the vast consequences which flowed from these events.

The campaign of the Dardanelles had been starved and crippled at every stage by the continued opposition of the French and British High Commands in France to the withdrawal of troops and munitions from the main theatre of the war. The abandonment of the Dardanelles led to the diversion of the Allied military forces on a scale far larger than its most ardent advocates had ever contemplated. Serbia had been destroyed; Bulgaria had joined our enemies; Roumania and Greece lay frozen in a terrorized neutrality. But still, as long as the British flag flew on the Peninsula and the British Fleet lay off the Straits, the main

power of Turkey was gripped and paralysed. The evacuation set free twenty Turkish divisions on the Peninsula, and Turkey henceforth was able to form a common front with the Bulgarians in Thrace, to attack Russia, to aid Austria, to overawe Roumania. Turkey was also placed in a position simultaneously to threaten Egypt and to reinforce Mesopotamia. The thirteen evacuated British divisions,<sup>1</sup> having been rested and refitted, were required to guard against the last two of these new dangers. The whole of the new army sent by France and Britain from the French theatre, amounting to seven additional divisions, was assigned to the defence of Salonika. Apart from the Anzacs, scarcely any of these twenty divisions of Allied troops ever fought against the Germans during the rest of the war. Scarcely one came into any direct contact with any enemy for nearly six months, and during the same period thirteen out of the twenty liberated Turkish divisions were added to the hostile strength in other theatres. Eleven went to the Caucasus and two to Galicia, in both cases adding to the burden which Russia had to bear. Thus the first fruits of the evacuation of Gallipoli may be variously computed at a total loss of strength to the Allies of from thirty to forty divisions, half the Army of a first-class power. It was evident that a very grave prolongation of the war must arise from this cause alone.

From the moment when the grip on the heart of the Turkish Empire was relaxed, and breathing space was given, its widespread limbs under German stimulation regained and developed their power. The three campaigns which had either begun or were imminent from Salonika, from Egypt, or in Mesopotamia, all grew rapidly into very great undertakings, and all continued until the last day of the war to make enormous drains upon the British resources and, to a lesser degree, upon those of France. By 1918 seven British and Indian divisions, composing an army of two hundred and seventy thousand men (exclusive of followers), were operating in Mesopotamia. The defence of the Suez Canal and subsequently the attack upon Turkey by the invasion of Palestine grew into a separate war which in any other period would have absorbed the attention of the world. Instead of thrusting at Constantinople, the heart of Turkey, or striking at her arm-pit at Alexandretta, or her elbow at Haifa, we began our attack from her finger-tips upwards. Slowly, painfully, with infinite exertion and expense, and by astonishing feats of arms and organization, we made our way across the deserts drawing artificial rivers with us through hundreds of miles of scorching sand. We toiled and fought our way mile by mile, and even yard by yard, from Gaza to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to

<sup>1</sup> The French Corps had already gone.

Damascus, never at any moment exacting from the enemy more than one-third of our own war effort. At the Armistice twelve British divisions, composing an army of nearly two hundred and eighty thousand men (exclusive of followers), were engaged in Palestine and Syria. The campaign from Salonika expanded not less formidably. At the end of 1917 twelve British and French divisions and two Italian divisions were in line against Turkish forces which perseverance at the Dardanelles might long ago have forced out of the war, and against the Bulgarian Army which a timely and prudent policy might have ranged upon our side. The sole addition gained by this great deployment of Allied force was six Serbian divisions brought by sea from the wreck of their country and four Greek divisions raised by Monsieur Venizelos after his revolt against King Constantine. In the end six hundred and thirty thousand Allied soldiers stood on the Salonika front.

The maintenance of these three great expeditions over long distances of sea threw a strain upon the maritime resources of Great Britain which, combined with the unlimited 'U-boat' warfare, came near to compassing our complete ruin in the spring of 1917. Thus the Admirals who thought only of the Grand Fleet and the Generals who thought only of the Main Army may learn how cruel are the revenges which Fortune wreaks upon those who disdain her first and golden offerings.

Wasteful and roundabout as was the method, the strategic conceptions which inspired the Eastern policy were vindicated in the end; and the collapse of Bulgaria after three years' war was the signal for the general catastrophe of the Central Powers.

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There ended with the Dardanelles all hope of forming direct and continuous contact with Russia. A railway 1,200 miles long might be built to Murmansk; Vladivostok might continue to pass supplies across a distance of 4,000 miles; but the intimate co-operation in men and munitions, the vast exportation of South Russian wheat, the expansion of a vitalizing trade, which could alone spring from the opening of the Black Sea, was for ever denied us.

The abandonment of Gallipoli dispelled the Russian dream. In her darkest hours, under the flail of Ludendorff, driven out of Poland, driven out of Galicia, her armies enduring disaster and facing death often without arms, the cost of living rising continually throughout her vast, secluded Empire, Russia had cheered herself by dwelling on the great prize of Constantinople. A profound chill spread through all ranks of the Russian people, and with it came suspicion no less deep-seated. England had not

really tried to force the Straits. From the moment when she had conceded the Russian claim to Constantinople, she had not been single-hearted, she had lost her interest in the enterprise. Her infirm action and divided counsels arose from secret motives hidden in the bosom of the State. And this while Russia was pouring out her blood as no race had ever done since men waged war. Such were the whispers which, winged by skilful German propaganda, spread far and wide through the Tsar's dominions, and in their wake every subversive influence gained in power. Lastly, the now inevitable prolongation of the struggle was destined to prove fatal to Russia. In the war of exhaustion to which we were finally condemned, which was indeed extolled as the last revelation of military wisdom, Russia was to be the first to fall, and in her fall to open upon herself a tide of ruin in which perhaps a score of millions of human beings have been engulfed. The consequences of these events abide with us to-day. They will darken the world for our children's children.

Another disaster supreme in its character was escaped by the breadth of a hair. It was only by the margin of a few weeks in 1917 that the German decision to begin the unlimited 'U-boat' warfare anticipated the Russian collapse. Had the Russian revolution broken out earlier, the desperate folly of quarrelling with America would never have been perpetrated by the German Government, and while Russia would inevitably have fallen, no ground would have been afforded to the United States to enter the war.

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Compared to these gigantic issues the fate of Roumania was but an incident. Yet that fate at the end of 1916, cruel and heart-rending in every circumstance, was the direct outcome of the failure to force the Dardanelles. This small country was at length in the autumn of 1916 persuaded to enter the war while still completely cut off from the Western Allies. Caught in the combined grip of German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Turkish troops, she was crushed with astonishing celerity; and, her armies broken, her capital pillaged, her entire territory subjugated, her Government driven on to foreign soil, she was forced into a separate Peace of the most merciless character.

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In its naval aspects the story of the Dardanelles illuminates the two different schools of thought which existed throughout the whole war at the Admiralty and in the Fleet. The first considered in the main that the war was the business of the Army; the task of the Royal Navy was to carry the Army wherever they wanted to go, to keep open the sea communications, and to be

ready in overwhelming strength to fight the enemy's main Fleet should it ever accord them an opportunity. The type of officer who adhered to these respectable views was naturally led to urge the unceasing and increasing construction of ships of all kinds for the Grand Fleet and for attendance upon it. They also steadfastly advocated the accumulation of material of every kind, raising continually their standards of reserves and piling up enormous quantities of ammunition which they husbanded so jealously that it was nearly all left unexpended at the Armistice. Not less naturally they viewed with extreme apprehension the loss even of the oldest ships, for these, if all the new ones were destroyed, might come in useful. Above all, they objected to any ship being risked except in contact with an enemy ship. As the enemy ships scarcely ever put to sea, adherence to these doctrines tended to confine the Navy to the sphere occupied by the great services of supply and transport which sustained the fronts of armies and in that vital function exhibited so many worthy qualities.

The opposite view was that the Navy was a gigantic instrument of offensive war, capable of intervening with decisive effect in the general strategy, and that it must bear its share of the risks and sufferings of the struggle. The Grand Fleet must, of course, be maintained in an absolutely assured superiority to the maximum forces of the enemy; but even the vital units of the Grand Fleet must be used in battle and on great occasions with audacity and with a fierce desire to engage the enemy and turn to advantage the awful hazards of war. As to vessels surplus to the ample but strict numerical requirements of the Grand Fleet we have seen what may be called the 'Forward School' use them, or wish to use them—aye, and lead them—with a cold and calculated ruthlessness of consequences and furious refusal to be denied success never surpassed in naval annals. It was in this spirit that Beatty broke into the Heligoland Bight on August 28, 1914, pressed his pursuit of von Hipper on January 24, and led the battle-cruisers and the fast division at Jutland. Contrast his attitude of mind at Jutland, when two of his six ships with 2,500 men had been blown out of existence in a few moments, with that of Admiral de Robeck—an officer of the highest physical courage—but saddened and smitten to the heart by the loss of three obsolete vessels with small loss of life in the numerous fleet which he commanded. To write thus is not to justify foolhardiness or the throwing away of any advantage over the enemy. True daring in war arises from a just sense of proportion, which again can only spring from a wide comprehension.

Such is the true war spirit of the Navy, which only gradually liberated itself from the shortsighted prudent housewifery of

the peace-time mind. It stirred beneath the ponderous routine of the line of battle ; it sprang into action with the battle-cruisers in the North Sea, in the destroyers at Jutland and the Dover Straits, in the submarines in the Heligoland Bight and in the Sea of Marmora, in the motor-launches at Zeebrugge and Cronstadt.

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The fact that one Admiral did not seriously attempt to force the Dardanelles when the Admiralty wished him to do so, and that the Admiralty would not allow another to try when he most earnestly desired, and the conclusions drawn therefrom throughout the Service, led us to a period of naval inertia and passivity from which there was a fearful awakening.

The entry of the Navy into the war was vehement and successful ; the dash into the Heligoland Bight paralysed at the outset the German initiative ; the Dogger Bank confirmed our prestige. The Germans waited solidly and passively for the next blow ; they believed that they were about to receive it at the Dardanelles ; but it never came. Slowly their diligent exact minds recovered confidence ; slowly they divined the infirmities and misgivings which lurked behind the overwhelming Armadas of their opponents. It was very dangerous to leave them so long to think. Not until the war had lasted thirty months was Germany in a position to begin her real submarine attack. And to that attack we nearly succumbed. It ought never to have been possible ; it never would have been possible but for the prolongation of the war. It would have been greatly diminished in intensity, in spite of the prolongation of the war, if the Germans had been continually pressed and harried by aggressive enterprise and novelty, if they had been bewildered and kept constantly in expectation. Through the greater part of 1915 peace brooded on the seas ; through the greater part of 1916, apart from the Battle of Jutland, there was comparative peace. But thereafter there was a change which came near to our complete undoing.

The wonderful exertions of the British Navy to defend the life of Britain and the cause of the Allies against the ' U-boats ' are a history in themselves. This supreme peril united both schools of naval thought. Those who had been content to limit the part of the Navy to maintaining the blockade and keeping open the sea communications found themselves challenged and in mortal peril even in their restricted sphere. There resulted the prodigious achievement of a victory over the most intangible of foes in which the whole Navy bore its part. It ought never to have been called for.

Yet even in their extreme danger the negative school of



Admirals and those who followed their advice resigned themselves to defensive measures either of an active or passive character, such as eating less bread, ploughing up the land, cutting down the forests, dispersing thousands of guns on merchant ships, building more merchant ships for submarines to sink, strewing the seas with mines, consuming hundreds of destroyers and thousands of small craft on escort and submarine hunting. Still, even when the German Fleet was hopelessly crippled, they continued to strengthen the Grand Fleet—even when all the power of the American Navy was added to their own. And by all these means they drew upon our limited resources to such an extent that in 1918 the equivalent in men and material of fifteen or twenty divisions was denied to the hard-pressed fighting line on land; and Fisher had to coin the biting sentence, 'Can the Army win the war, before the Navy loses it?'

Nevertheless, by an enormous inroad upon our resources and an amazing exhibition of seamanship and faithful skill and courage, the British Navy eventually crushed the 'U-boat.' But how narrowly and at what a cost!

It was left to Admiral Keyes to show at Zeebrugge that there were other ways of making war from the sea.

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The end of the Dardanelles campaign closed the second great period of the struggle. There was nothing left on land now but the war of exhaustion—not only of armies but of nations. No more strategy, very little tactics; only the dull wearing down of the weaker combination by exchanging lives; only the multiplying of machinery on both sides to exchange them quicker. The continuous front now stretched not only from the Alps to the Seas, but across the Balkan Peninsula, across Palestine, across Mesopotamia. *The Central Empires had successfully defended their southern flank in the Balkans and in Turkey. Their victory quelled simultaneously all likelihood of any attempt against their northern flank upon the Baltic.* All such ideas had received their quietus. Good, plain, straightforward frontal attacks by valiant flesh and blood against wire and machine guns, 'killing Germans' while Germans killed Allies twice as often, calling out the men of forty, of fifty, and even of fifty-five, and the youths of eighteen, sending the wounded soldiers back three or four times over into the shambles—such were the sole manifestations now reserved for the military art. And when at the end, three years later, the throng of uniformed functionaries who in the seclusion of their offices had complacently presided over this awful process, presented Victory to their exhausted nations, it proved only less ruinous to the victor than to the vanquished.

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The tale is told. Yet at its conclusion we may cast back upon it one final glance. It is impossible to assemble the long chain of fatal missed chances which prevented the forcing of the Dardanelles without experiencing a sense of awe. One sees in retrospect at least a dozen situations all beyond the control of the enemy, any one of which, decided differently, would have ensured success. If we had known when it was resolved to make the naval attack that an army would be available and would be given, a surprise combined naval and military attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula would have been decided upon and backed with goodwill. If an army had never been sent, the Navy with its mine-sweeping service well organized would have resumed its efforts after the check on March 18; and had it resumed, it would soon have exhausted the ammunition in the Turkish forts and swept the minefields. Had the despatch of the 29th Division not been countermanded on February 20, or had it been packed in the transports in readiness to fight on disembarkation, Sir Ian Hamilton would have attacked the Gallipoli Peninsula almost immediately after March 18 and would, in that event, have found it ill-defended. The battles of June and July were all critical in the last degree. Any substantial addition to the attack would have been decisive. The paralysis of the Executive during the formation of the Coalition Government in May, delayed for six weeks the arrival of the British reinforcements, and enabled the Turks to double the strength of their Army. Thus the favourable moment at the beginning of July was thrown away. The Battle of Suvla Bay in August was marked by a combination of evil happenings extraordinary among the hazards of war. The story of the IXth British Corps and of the whole Suvla landing would be incredible if it were not true. The resignation of Lord Fisher, my dismissal from the Admiralty, and the unpopularity of the Dardanelles enterprise through ignorance, intimidated our successors on the Board of Admiralty from accepting responsibility for the risks that were necessary. The refusal of the Greek alliance and army when offered in 1914; the failure to obtain that alliance and army when sought in 1915; its mad rejection by Russia; the delicate balance on which the fateful decision of Bulgaria depended; the extraordinary circumstances in Paris which led in September, 1915, to the appointment of General Sarrail and to the proposal of the French Government to send a large expedition to take possession of the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, and the reversal of this policy which offered so many prospects of success; the diversion of all the forces that became available towards the end of 1915 from the vital objective of the Dardanelles and Constantinople to the prodigal, and for nearly three years indecisive, operations from Salonika; the final decision

to evacuate Gallipoli, at the time when the position of the Turkish army was most desperate and the British Navy most confident—all these are separate tragedies.

It was not ordained that the world should escape easily from Armageddon, that victory should bring triumph and profit to any of the combatants, or that old systems should endure unchastened among men.



## PART III

1916 - 1918

TO  
ALL WHO ENDURED

## PART III

1916-1918

### CHAPTER I

#### THE HIGH COMMAND

Europe Gripped in the Vice—General Michel's Report of 1911—His Dismissal—Joffre Succeeds—His Stability and Impartiality—His Miscalculations—The First Disasters—Galliéni and the Marne—Victory and Reproach—Galliéni and Joffre—Galliéni, Minister of War—France and the Joffre Legend—Sir John French recalled—The new Commander-in-Chief—His Credentials—Decline in Lord Kitchener's Authority—His Just Fame.

THE New Year's light of 1916 rising upon a frantic and miserable world revealed in its full extent the immense battlefield to which Europe was reduced and on which the noblest nations of Christendom mingled in murderous confusion. It was now certain that the struggle would be prolonged to an annihilating conclusion. The enormous forces on either side were so well matched that the injuries they must suffer and inflict in their struggles were immeasurable. There was no escape. All the combatants in both combinations were gripped in a vice from which no single State could extricate itself.

The northern Provinces of France, invaded and in German occupation, inspired the French people with a commanding impulse to drive the enemy from their soil. The trench lines on which the armies were in deadlock ran—not along the frontiers, where perhaps parley would not have been impossible—but through the heart of France. The appeal to clear the national territory from foreign oppression went home to every cottage and steeled every heart. Germany on the other hand, while her armies stood almost everywhere on conquered territory, could not in the full flush of her strength yield what she had gained with so much blood, nor pay forfeit for her original miscalculations, nor make reparation for the wrong she had done. Any German Dynasty or Government which had proposed so wise and righteous a course would have been torn to pieces. The French losses and the German conquests of territory thus equally compelled a continuance of the struggle by both nations. A similar incentive operated upon Russia; and in addition the belief that defeat meant revolution hardened all governing resolves. In Britain

obligations of honour to her suffering Allies, and particularly to Belgium, forbade the slightest suggestion of slackening or withdrawal. And behind this decisive claim of honour there welled up from the heart of the island race a fierce suppressed passion and resolve for victory at all costs and at all risks, latent since the downfall of Napoleon.

Not less peremptory were the forces dominating the other parties to the struggle. Italy had newly entered the war upon promises which offered her a dazzling reward. These promises were embodied in the Pact of London. They involved conditions to which Austria-Hungary could never submit without final ruin as a great Power. The acceptance by Britain and France of the Russian claim to Constantinople condemned Turkey to a similar fate. Failure meant therefore to both the Austrian and the Turkish Empires not only defeat but dissolution. As for Bulgaria, she could only expect from the victory of the Allies the dire measure she had meted to Serbia.

Thus in every quarter the stakes were desperate or even mortal ; and each of the vast confederacies was riveted together within itself and each part chained to its respective foe by bonds which only the furnace of war could fuse or blast away. Wealth, science, civilization, patriotism, steam transport and world credit enabled the whole strength of every belligerent to be continually applied to the war. The entire populations fought and laboured, women and men alike, to the utmost of their physical destructiveness. National industry was in every country converted to the production of war material. Tens of millions of soldiers, scores of thousands of cannon hurled death across battle lines, themselves measured in thousands of miles. Havoc on such a scale had never even been dreamed of in the past, and had never proceeded at such a speed in all human history. To carry this process to the final limit was the dearest effort of every nation, and of nearly all that was best and noblest in every nation.

But at the same time that Europe had been fastened into this frightful bondage, the art of war had fallen into an almost similar helplessness. No means of procuring a swift decision presented itself to the strategy of the commanders, or existed on the battlefields of the armies. The chains which held the warring nations to their task were not destined to be severed by military genius ; no sufficient preponderance of force was at the disposal of either side ; no practical method of a decisive offensive had been discovered ; and the ill-directed fires of war, leaving the fetters unbroken, preyed through fatal years upon the flesh of the captive nations.



In August, 1914, the name 'Joffre' broke for the first time on British ears. Nothing was known of him then except that he was the proclaimed and accepted Chief of the Armies of France in that hour of her mortal peril which we had determined to share. Seeing that the existence of France was at stake, and trusting in the historic war science of the French Army, the British Government and people gave their confidence frankly and fully to this massive new personage who emerged so suddenly from the recesses of the French War Office and strode forward calmly towards the advancing storm.

Who was he and how did he come to be there at the summit in the supreme hour? What qualities had he shown, what deeds had he done, what forces did he combine or compel, through what chances and trials had he passed, on his road to almost the greatest responsibility in the realm of violent action which ever enveloped one man? To answer such questions it is necessary to retrace the steps of history for some distance.

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Early in 1911 General Michel, Vice-President of the Superior Council of War and Commander-in-Chief designate of the French Army in the event of war, drew up a report upon the plan of campaign. He declared that Germany would certainly attack France through Belgium; that her turning movement would not be limited to the southern side of the Belgian Meuse but would extend far beyond it, comprising Brussels and Antwerp in its scope. He affirmed that the German General Staff would use immediately not only their twenty-one active army corps but in addition the greater part of the twenty-one reserve corps which it was known they intended to form on general mobilization. France should therefore be prepared to meet an immense turning movement through Belgium and a hostile army which would comprise *at the outset* the greater part of forty-two army corps. To confront this invasion he proposed that the French should organize and use a large proportion of their own reserve from the very beginning. For this purpose he desired to create a reserve formation at the side of each active formation, and to make both units take the field together under the officer commanding the active unit. By this means the strength of the French Army on mobilization would be raised from 1,300,000 to 2,000,000, and the German invading army would be confronted with at least equal numbers. Many of the French corps would be raised to 70,000 men and most of the regiments would become brigades of six battalions.

These forces General Michel next proceeded to distribute. He proposed to place his greatest mass, nearly 500,000 strong,

between Lille and Avesnes to counter the main strength of the German turning movement. He placed a second mass of 300,000 men on the right of the first between Hirson and Reims; he assigned 220,000 men for the garrison of Paris, which was also to act as the general reserve. His remaining troops were disposed along the Eastern frontier. Such was the plan in 1911 of the leading soldier of France.

These ideas ran directly counter to the main stream of French military thought. The General Staff did not believe that Germany would make a turning movement through Belgium, certainly not through Northern Belgium. They did not believe that the Germans would use their reserve formations in the opening battles. They did not believe that reserve formations could possibly be made capable of taking part in the struggle until after a prolonged period of training. They held, on the contrary, that the Germans, using only their active army, would attack with extreme rapidity and must be met and forestalled by a French counter-thrust across the Eastern frontier. For this purpose the French should be organized with as large a proportion of soldiers actually serving and as few reservists as possible, and with this end in view they demanded the institution of the Three Years Service Law which would ensure the presence of at least two complete contingents of young soldiers. The dominant spirits in the French Staff, apart from their Chief, belonged to the Offensive school, of whom the most active apostle was Colonel de Grandmaison, and believed ardently that victory could be compelled from the first moment by a vehement and furious rush upon the foe.

This collision of opinion was fatal to General Michel. It may be that his personality and temperament were not equal to the profound and penetrating justice of his ideas. Such discrepancies have often marred true policies. An overwhelming combination was formed against him by his colleagues on the Council of War. During the tension of Agadir the issue reached a head. The new Minister of War, Colonel Messimy, insisted upon a discussion of the Michel scheme in full Council. The Vice-President found himself alone; almost every other General declared his direct disagreement. In consequence of this he was a few days later informed by the War Minister that he did not possess the confidence of the French Army, and on July 23 he resigned the position of Vice-President of the War Council.

It had been intended by the Government that Michel should be succeeded either by Galli  ni or Pau; but Pau made claims to the appointing of General Officers which the Minister would not accept. His nomination was not proceeded with, ostensibly on the score of his age, and this pretext once given was still more

valid against Galliéni, who was older. It was in these circumstances that the choice fell upon General Joffre.

Joffre was an engineer officer who, after various employments in Madagascar under Galliéni and in Morocco, had gained a reputation as a well-balanced, silent, solid man, and who in 1911 occupied a seat on the Superior Council of War. It would have been difficult to find any figure more unlike the British idea of a Frenchman than this bull-headed broad-shouldered, slow-thinking, phlegmatic, bucolic personage. Nor would it have been easy to find a type which at the first view would have seemed less suited to weave or unravel the profound and gigantic webs of modern war. He was the junior member of the War Council. He had never commanded an army nor directed great manoeuvres even in a War Game. In such exercises he had played the part of Inspector-General of the Lines of Communication, and to this post he was at that time assigned on mobilization.

Joffre received the proposal for his tremendous appointment with misgiving and embarrassment which were both natural and creditable. His reluctances were overcome by the assurance that General de Castelnau, who was deeply versed in the plans and theories of the French Staff and in the great operations of war, would be at his special disposal. Joffre therefore assumed power as the nominee of the dominant elements in the French Staff and as the exponent of their doctrines. To this conception he remained constantly loyal, and the immense disasters which France was destined to suffer three years later became from that moment almost inevitable.

General Joffre's qualities however fitted him to render most useful service to the various fleeting French Administrations which preceded the conflict. He represented and embodied 'Stability' in a world of change, and 'Impartiality' in a world of faction. He was a 'good Republican' with a definite political view, without being a political soldier, or one who dealt in intrigue. No one could suspect him of religion, but neither on the other hand could anyone accuse him of favouring Atheist generals at the expense of Catholics. Here at any rate was something for France, with her politicians chattering, fuming and frothing along to Armageddon, to rest her hand upon. For nearly three years and under successive Governments Joffre continued to hold his post, and we are assured that his advice on technical matters was almost always taken by the various Ministers who flitted across the darkening scene. He served under Caillaux and Messimy; he served under Poincaré and Millerand; he served under Briand and Étienne; he was still serving under Viviani and Messimy again when the explosion came.

Reference has already been made in the first Volume to the

immense miscalculations and almost fatal errors made by General Joffre or in his name in the first great collision of the war. The withering winds of French criticism have pitilessly exposed the deformities of Plan XVII. The Germans, as General Michel had predicted, made their vast turning movement through Belgium. They brought into action almost immediately thirty-four army corps of which thirteen, or their equivalent, were reserve formations. Of the 2,000,000 men who marched to invade France and Belgium 700,000 only were serving conscripts and 1,300,000 were reservists. Against these General Joffre could muster only 1,300,000, of whom also 700,000 were serving conscripts but only 600,000 reservists. 1,200,000 additional French reservists responded immediately to the national call, encumbering the depots, without equipment, without arms, without cadres, without officers. In consequence the Germans outnumbered the French at the outbreak by *three to two* along the whole line of battle, and as they economized their forces on their left, they were able to deliver the turning movement on their right in overwhelming strength. At Charleroi they were *three to one*.

The strategic aspect of General Joffre's policy was not less stultified than the administrative. The easterly and north-easterly attacks into which his four Armies of the Right and Centre were impetuously launched, were immediately stopped and hurled back with a slaughter so frightful that it has never yet been comprehended by the world. His left army, the Fifth, and a group of three Reserve Divisions, sent at the last moment to its aid, together with the British Army, were simultaneously forced back and turned. They only escaped complete envelopment and destruction by the timely retreat which General Lanrezac and Sir John French executed each independently on his own initiative, and also by the most stubborn resistance and effective rifle fire of the highly trained professional British Infantry. To General Lanrezac, for his complete grasp of the situation and courageous order of retreat, the gratitude of France is due.

It was for the tactical sphere that General Joffre and his school of 'Young Turks,' as they came to be called in France, had reserved their crowning mistakes. The French Infantry marched into battle conspicuous on the landscape in their red breeches and blue coats; their Artillery Officers in black and gold were even more sharply defined targets. The doctrine of the Offensive, raised to the height of a religious frenzy, animated all ranks, and in no rank was restrained by any foreknowledge of the power of magazine rifles and machine guns. A cruel shock lay before them. The Third French Army marching towards Arlon blundered into the Germans in the morning mist of August 22, four or five of its divisions having their heads shorn away while they were still

close to their camping grounds. Everywhere along the battle front, whenever Germans were seen, the signal was given to charge. 'Vive la France!' 'A la baïonnette,' 'En Avant'—and the brave troops, nobly led by their regimental officers, who sacrificed themselves in even greater proportion, responded in all the magnificent fighting fury for which the French nation has been traditionally renowned. Sometimes these hopeless onslaughts were delivered to the strains of the Marseillaise, six, seven or even eight hundred yards from the German positions. Though the Germans invaded, it was more often the French who attacked. Long swathes of red and blue corpses littered the stubble fields. The collision was general along the whole battle front, and there was a universal recoil. In the mighty battle of the Frontiers, the magnitude and terror of which is scarcely now known to British consciousness, more than 300,000 Frenchmen were killed, wounded or made prisoners.

However, General Joffre preserved his sangfroid amid these disastrous surprises to an extent which critics have declared almost indistinguishable from insensibility. Unperturbed by his own responsibility he dismissed incompetent or even competent subordinates in all quarters. He issued orders for a general retreat of the French armies which contemplated their withdrawal, before resuming the offensive, not merely behind the Marne but behind the Seine, and comprised the isolation or abandonment both of Paris and of Verdun. While these plans were in progress there occurred the much-debated intervention of General Galliéni, the newly constituted Governor of Paris. A whole library of French literature is extant on this famous episode. The partisans of Galliéni seek to prove their case by letters, telegrams, telephonic conversations, orders and established facts. The champions of Joffre minimize these assertions, and rest themselves on the solid declaration that nothing can divert the credit of the victory from the bearer of the prime responsibility.

From these claims it is possible to draw a reasonable conclusion. The overriding responsibility of the supreme commander remains unassailable. It cannot be more convincingly expressed than in words attributed to Joffre himself. Indiscreetly asked 'Who won the battle of the Marne?' he is said to have replied, 'That, Madame, is a difficult question: but I know who would have lost it, supposing it had been lost.' Joffre and the French Headquarters were withdrawing their armies with the avowed intention of turning on their pursuers and fighting a decisive battle at an early date. Exactly when or where they would fight they had not determined. All the armies were in constant contact, and everything was in flux. But certainly they contemplated making their supreme effort at some moment when the five pursuing

German armies were between the horns of Paris and Verdun.

Calliéni's intervention decided this moment and decided it gloriously. He it was who had insisted on the defence of the Capital when Joffre had advocated declaring it an open town. He had inspired the Government to order Joffre to place a field army at his disposal for its defence. When the endless columns of the right-hand German army skirting Paris turned south-east, he decided instantly to strike at their exposed flank with his whole force. He set all his troops in motion towards the east; he convinced Joffre that the moment had come to strike; and he persuaded him that the flanking thrust should be made to the north rather than to the south of the Marne, as Joffre had purposed. Finally, he struck his blow with all the sureness and spontaneity of military genius; and the blow heralded the battle whose results saved Europe.

When a Commander-in-Chief in a crisis of war has been demonstrably persuaded to alter his plans by a subordinate of the highest rank, his senior in service, almost his equal in authority, and when this alteration has been followed by a victory of supreme importance, it is evident that the materials of controversy will not be lacking. After the Marne there was a breathing space, and immediately the voice of criticism was raised against the strategy and conduct of General Joffre. To the failure of his war plans and to the dispute about the credit of the Marne was added the charge of defective preparation for war. No other Frenchman had sat in one great position for the three years before the war; no other man had his responsibility for the condition of the French military resources. The scarcity of machine guns, the want of heavy artillery, the absence even of field-service uniforms could all be laid at his door rather than at any other—not that it follows that anyone else would have done better. Thus while to the world-public and before the enemy and, it must be added, in the eyes of the rank and file of the French armies, Joffre towered up as a grand figure triumphing over the tempest and the victor of the greatest and most decisive battle of history, there flowed all the time a strong subterranean current of well-informed mistrust and opposition.

Joffre, if not a heaven-born general, was unquestionably an impressive personality. His position had become firmly established in relation to the grand scale of events. His sense of proportion had from the outset been extended to the limits of the whole battlefield. No other living man had had the advantages of his standpoint or environment. He was accustomed to think only in terms of armies and groups of armies; all the other frenzied and frightful detail was definitely beneath his consciousness, as it was beneath his sphere of duty. Allied to this supreme

outlook, which necessarily only a few men in any country can enjoy, Joffre had the physique and temperament exactly suited to the kind of strains he had to bear and the scale of the decisions he had to take. On these solid foundations the splendid position which he occupied and the tremendous events over which he presided soon built up a vast prestige. The censorship, for reasons which certainly had weight, discouraged or forbade both in France and England the 'writing up' of any generals except the Commander-in-Chief in each country. Thus the population of the allied countries knew only Joffre, and even in France it was to Joffre, and Joffre above all others, that the trusting faith of the multitude was month by month and year by year deliberately and mechanically directed.

Nevertheless, as the weary months of trench warfare in 1915 passed away, diversified only by the costly failures of the French offensive in Artois in the spring and in Champagne in the autumn, the currents of hostility gathered continually in volume and intensity. The great popularity of Millerand, who became Minister for War in the early days of the struggle, was slowly sapped through his unswerving loyalty to Joffre, and upon the reconstitution of the French Government under Briand at the end of October, 1915, Millerand disappeared from the scene. He was succeeded as Minister of War by none other than Galliéni.

The relations between Joffre and the new Minister were remarkable. Only age had prevented Galliéni from occupying the supreme post at the outbreak of the war. Joffre had actually served under his orders in a minor capacity in Madagascar. On the declaration of war Galliéni had received a letter from the Minister, approved by Joffre, appointing him Joffre's successor should the command of the French armies fall vacant. The extraordinary part played by Galliéni in the crisis of the Marne has been briefly indicated here, and Joffre was certainly not unconscious of the claims that might arise from it. No sooner was the victory won, than he withdrew the Sixth Army from the control of Galliéni, leaving him again simply Governor of Paris. When in December, 1915, the French armies were formed into two groups, Galliéni was anxious to be called to the command of one of them. But Joffre's choice fell elsewhere. Some months later, when the command of the Sixth Army fell vacant, it was offered to Galliéni. But seeing that this command was only a fraction of what he had directed in the Battle of the Marne, Galliéni put the proposal on one side. Finally, on October 1, 1915, Joffre wishing to place on record once for all his view of Galliéni's contribution to the great victory, had caused to be published in the *Gazette* a citation which gave widespread offence.<sup>1</sup> Galliéni's comment is said to

<sup>1</sup> 'Est cité à l'ordre de l'Armée:

Galliéni, Général, Gouverneur Militaire et Commandant des Armées de Paris,

have been: 'I could never serve again under the orders of Joffre.'

But in October, 1915, the rôles are swiftly reversed, and it is Galliéni who holds the superior position, not only as Minister of War, but as a greater soldier, and, in the eyes of many, a greater hero. In the brief portion of Galliéni's life which was lived on the world-stage, no feature bears the sign of true greatness more than his treatment of Joffre. Convinced by Briand that Joffre, whatever his shortcomings, was at that time necessary to the national defence, he supported him in every conceivable manner in the field, and defended him in the Chamber on numerous occasions with loyal comradeship. But while thus to the confusion of his own friends and admirers he paralysed for the time being the hostile movement against Joffre, Galliéni did not fail as a Minister to press for a reform of the many abuses and usurpations of power which had grown up in the Grand Quartier Général at Chantilly. Such was the situation in the French High Command at the period at which this volume begins, when Kitchener was feverishly seeking to defend Egypt and Falkenhayn was writing a memorandum about Verdun.

Every great nation in times of crisis has its own way of doing things. The Germans looked to their Kaiser—the All-Highest—whose word was law—but they also looked after him. In some way or other the changing group of dominating personalities at the head of the German Empire worked the Imperial Oracle. We too in England have our own methods, more difficult to explain to foreigners perhaps than any others—and on the whole more inchoate, more crude, more clumsy. Still—they work. And there is also the French method. Studying French war-politics, one is struck first of all by their extreme complexity. The number of persons involved, the intricacy of their relations, the swiftness and yet the smoothness with which their whole arrangement is continually changed, all baffle the stranger during the event, and weary him afterwards in the tale. The prevailing impression is that of a swarm of bees—all buzzing together, and yet each bee—or nearly every bee—with a perfectly clear idea of what has got to be done in the practical interests of the hive.

At the end of 1915 there were two very definite convictions established in the wide secret circles of France—Ministers,

Commandant du camp retranché et des armées de Paris, et placé le 2 septembre 1914 sous les ordres du commandant en chef, a fait preuve des plus hautes qualités militaires :

' En contribuant, par les renseignements qu'il avait recueillis, à déterminer la direction de marche prise par l'aile droite allemande ;

' En orientant judicieusement, pour participer à la bataille, les forces mobiles à sa disposition ;

' En facilitant, par tous les moyens en son pouvoir, l'accomplissement de la mission assignée par le Commandant en chef à ces forces mobiles.'

(Ordre du 25 septembre 1915.)



Lobbies, Army, Press, Society—which were actually concerned in the national defence. The first was that Joffre was not Napoleon ; the second that his name and fame constituted an invaluable asset to France. 'Unity of Command' was not yet within the bounds of possibility, 'unity of front'—all the fronts in one relation—was already a watchword. If this was to be achieved, and if France was to gain or keep control of the strategy of the allied Powers in all the Conferences and joint decisions that were necessary to coherent military action, what martial figure-head could she produce comparable to Joffre ? France—the France that was conducting the war and fighting for life and honour—believed that the name Joffre and the presence of Joffre would impress and dominate the inexperienced but on the whole well-meaning English and carry weight with the remote colossus of Russia. But they did not like the idea of his leading their remaining armies into further offensives. How then to combine the two desirables ? On this basis and with this object a prolonged series of delicate, subtle processes, manœuvres and devices were elaborated. Joffre was to be made a General of Generals, established in Paris out of contact with any particular army, his eye ranging over all, presiding over every inter-allied military conference, brought forward by the French Government to pronounce with commanding authority to allied Cabinets or Statesmen, while the actual conduct of the French armies against Germany would be entrusted to someone else. To this end, and as a first step, Joffre was appointed in November, 1915, to the command of all the French armies, whether in France or in the Orient, and Castelnau was made Major-General at headquarters, an appointment which was intended to carry with it in the highest possible sense the attributes of Chief of the Staff with an implied reversion of the supreme command in France.

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The end of the year brought also a change in the Command of the British Armies in France. We have seen in what circumstances and with what misgivings Sir John French had allowed himself to be involved in the previous September at Loos in the unwisdom of the great French offensive in Champagne. He had conformed with loyalty and ultimately even with ardour to the wishes of Lord Kitchener and to the acquiescence of the British Cabinet. But all this stood him in no stead on the morrow of failure. Those who had not the conviction or resolution to arrest the forlorn attack became easily censorious of its conduct after the inevitable failure. During the course of December proceedings were set on foot by which, at the end of the year, Sir John French was transferred from the Command of the British Army in France

to that of the forces at home, and succeeded in that high situation by the Commander of his First Army, Sir Douglas Haig.

These chapters will recount the fall from dazzling situation of many eminent men ; and it is perhaps worth while at this point to place the reader on his guard against unworthy or uncharitable judgments. The Great War wore out or justly or unjustly cast aside leaders in every sphere as lavishly as it squandered the lives of private soldiers—French, Kitchener, Joffre, Nivelle, Cadorna, Jellicoe, Asquith, Briand, Painlevé, and many others, even in the victorious states. All made their contribution and fell. Whatever the pain at the moment to individuals, there are no circumstances of humiliation in such supersessions. Only those who succeeded, who lived through the convulsion and emerged prosperously at the end, know by what obscure twists and turns of chance they escaped a similar lot. 'Those two impostors,' Triumph and Disaster, never played their pranks more shamelessly than in the Great War. When men have done their duty and done their best, have shirked no labour and flinched from no decision that it was their task to take, there is no disgrace in eventual personal failure. They are but good comrades who fall in the earlier stages of an assault, which others, profiting by their efforts and experiences, ultimately carry to victory.

Alike in personal efficiency and professional credentials, Sir Douglas Haig was the first officer of the British Army. He had obtained every qualification, gained every experience and served in every appointment requisite for the General Command. He was a Cavalry Officer of social distinction and independent means, whose whole life had been devoted to military study and practice. He had been Adjutant of his regiment ; he had played in its polo team ; he had passed through the Staff College ; he had been Chief Staff Officer to the Cavalry Division in the South African war ; he had earned a Brevet and decorations in the field ; he had commanded a Column ; he had held a command in India ; he had served at the War Office ; he had commanded at Aldershot the two divisions which formed the only organized British army corps, and from this position he had led the First British army corps to France. He had borne the principal fighting part in every battle during Sir John French's command. At the desperate crisis of the first Battle of Ypres, British battalions and batteries, wearied, outnumbered and retreating, had been inspired by the spectacle of the Corps Commander riding slowly forward at the head of his whole staff along the shell-swept Menin Road into close contact with the actual fighting line.

It was impossible to assemble around any other officer a series of appointments and qualifications in any way comparable in their cumulative effects with these. He had fulfilled with exceptional

credit every requirement to which the pre-war British military hierarchy attached importance. For many years, and at every stage in his career, he had been looked upon alike by superiors and equals as a man certain to rise, if he survived, to the summit of the British Army. Colonel Henderson, the biographer of Stonewall Jackson, Professor at the Staff College during Haig's graduation, had predicted this event. His conduct in the first year of the war had vindicated every hope. His appointment as Commander-in-Chief on the departure of Sir John French created no surprise, aroused no heart-burnings, excited no jealousy. The military profession reposed in him a confidence which the varied fortunes, disappointments and miscalculations attendant upon three years of war on the greatest scale left absolutely unshaken.

The esteem of his military colleagues found a healthy counterpart in his own self-confidence. He knew the place was his by merit and by right. He knew he had no rivals, and that he owed his place neither to favour nor usurpation. This attitude of mind was invaluable. Allied to a resolute and equable temperament it enabled him to sustain with composure, not only the shocks of defeat and disaster at the hands of the enemy, but those more complex and not less wearing anxieties arising from his relations with French allies and British Cabinets. He was as sure of himself at the head of the British Army as a country gentleman on the soil which his ancestors had trod for generations, and to whose cultivation he had devoted his life. But the Great War owned no Master; no one was equal to its vast and novel issues; no human hand controlled its hurricanes; no eye could pierce its whirlwind dust-clouds. In the course of this narrative it is necessary in the interests of the future to seek and set forth in all sincerity what are believed to be the true facts and values. But when this process is complete, the fact remains that no other subject of the King could have endured the ordeal which was his lot with the phlegm, the temper and the fortitude of Sir Douglas Haig.

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The failure of the Dardanelles Expedition was fatal to Lord Kitchener. During the whole of 1915 he had been in sole and plenary charge of the British military operations, and until November on every important point his will had been obeyed. The new Cabinet, like the leading members of the old, had now in their turn lost confidence in his war direction. The conduct of the Gallipoli campaign showed only too plainly the limitations of this great figure at this period of his life and in this tremendous situation both as an organizer and a man of action. His advocacy of the offensive in France which had failed so conspicuously

at Loos and in Champagne was upon record. Under the agony of the Gallipoli evacuation his will-power had plainly crumpled, and the long series of contradictory resolves which had marked his treatment of this terrible question was obvious to all who knew the facts.

Already, in November, had come direct rebuff. His plan for a fresh landing in the Gulf of Alexandretta, though devised by him in the actual theatre of operations, had been decisively vetoed by the new War Committee of the Cabinet and by the Allies in conference. In a series of telegrams the inclination of which could scarcely be obscure, he was encouraged to transform his definite mission at the Dardanelles into a general and extensive tour of inspection in the East. His prompt return to London showed that he was not himself unaware of the change in his position. The disposition of the British forces in the East which he made after the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac was certainly not such as to retrieve a waning prestige. It was natural that Egypt should loom disproportionately large in his mind. Almost his whole life had been spent and his fame won there. He now saw this beloved country menaced, as he believed, by an imminent Turkish invasion on a large scale. In an endeavour to ward off the imaginary peril he crowded division after division into Egypt, and evidently contemplated desperate struggles for the defence of the Suez Canal at no distant date. In the early days, at the end of 1914 and beginning of 1915, it had been worth while for a score of thousand Turks to threaten the Canal and create as much disturbance as possible in order to delay the movement of troops from India, Australia and New Zealand to the European battlefield. But both the usefulness and feasibility of such an operation were destroyed by the great increase in the scale of the war in the eastern Mediterranean theatre which had been in progress during the whole year. The German and Turkish staffs were well content to rely upon threats and boasting, and to make the proclamation of their intention a substitute for the diversion of armies. 'Egypt,' exclaimed Enver Pasha in December, 'is our objective'; and following this simple deception the British concentration in Egypt was vehemently pursued.

On the top of this came the reverse in Mesopotamia, for which Lord Kitchener had no direct responsibility. General Townshend had marched on Baghdad, and the War Committee was led to believe that he was himself the mainspring of the enterprise. General Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, had not informed them that his audacious and hitherto brilliantly successful subordinate had in writing recorded his misgivings about the operation. In the event Townshend's force of about 20,000 men was on November 25 forced to retreat after a well-

contested action at Ctesiphon and only escaped by a swift and disastrous retreat to a temporary refuge at Kut.

On December 3 the War Committee determined to re-create the Imperial General Staff at the War Office in an effective form. The decision was drastic. The experiment of making a Field-Marshal Secretary of State for War had run its full course. Lord Kitchener might still hold the Seals of Office, but his power, hitherto so overwhelming that it had absorbed and embodied the authority alike of the ministerial and the professional Chiefs, was now to be confined within limits which few politicians would accept in a Secretaryship of State. Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff in France, was brought to Whitehall, and an Order in Council was issued establishing his rights and responsibility in terms both strict and wide. Lord Kitchener acquiesced in the abrogation, not only of the exceptional personal powers which he had enjoyed, but of those which have always been inherent in the office which he retained.

The end of his great story is approaching: the long life full of action, lighted by hard-won achievement, crowned by power such as a British subject had rarely wielded and all the regard and honour that Britain and her Empire can bestow, was now declining through the shadows. The sudden onrush of the night, the deep waters of the North, were destined to preserve him and his renown from the shallows.

" Better to sink beneath the shock,  
Than moulder piecemeal on the rock."

The solemn days when he stood forth as Constable of Britain beneath whose arm her untrained people braced themselves for war, were ended. His life of duty could only reach its consummation in a warrior's death. His record in the Great War as strategist, administrator and leader, will be judged by the eyes of other generations than our own. Let us hope they will also remember the comfort his character and personality gave to his countrymen in their hours of hardest trial.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BLOOD TEST

A General Survey—The First Shock—The Five Great Allied Assaults—Battles and the Time Factor—The Great Battle Days—The Battle Weeks—Colonel Boraston's Contentions—Sir William Robertson's Policy—His Reasonings—His Admissions—The Blood Test—British, French and German Losses—The Price of the Offensive—The Casualty Tables—'Killing Germans'—Wearing down the Germans—The Balance of Attrition—The German Intake—Ludendorff's Contribution—The Moral Factor—The General Conclusion—Manceuvre and Surprise—The 'Side Shows'—The Limits of Responsibility.

IT is necessary in this chapter to ask the reader, before the campaign of 1916 begins, to take a somewhat statistical view of the whole war in the West, and to examine its main episodes in their character, proportion and relation.

The events divide themselves naturally into three time-periods: the first, 1914; the second, 1915, 1916 and 1917; and the third, 1918: the First Shock; the Deadlock; and the Final Convulsion. The first period is at once the simplest and the most intense. The trained armies of Germany and France rushed upon each other, grappled furiously, broke apart for a brief space, endeavoured vainly to outflank each other, closed again in desperate conflict, broke apart once more, and then from the Alps to the sea lay gasping and glaring at each other not knowing what to do. Neither was strong enough to overcome the other, neither possessed the superior means or method required for the successful offensive. In this condition both sides continued for more than three years unable to fight a general battle, still less to make a strategic advance. It was not until 1918 that the main force of the armies on both sides was simultaneously engaged as in 1914 in a decisive struggle. In short, the war in the West resolved itself into two periods of supreme battle, divided from each other by a three-years' siege.

The scale and intensity of the First Shock in 1914 has not been fully realized even by the well-instructed French public, and is not at all understood in England. At the beginning all totals of casualties were suppressed in every combatant country by a vigorous censorship. Later on in the war when more was known, no one had time to look back in the midst of new perils to the early days; and since the war no true impression has ever reached the

public. British eyes have been fixed upon the vivid pictures of Liège, Mons and Le Cateau, that part of the Battle of the Marne which occurred near Paris, and the desperate struggle round Ypres. The rest lies in a dark background, which it is now possible to illuminate.

In the first three months of actual fighting from the last week in August to the end of November, when the German drive against the Channel ports had come to an end and the first great invasion was definitely arrested, the French lost in killed, prisoners and wounded 854,000<sup>1</sup> men. In the same period the small British army, about one-seventh of the French fighting strength, lost 85,000<sup>2</sup> men, making a total Allied loss of 939,000. Against this, in the same period, the Germans lost 677,000.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the Germans, although invading and presumably attacking, inflicted greater slaughter than they suffered, is due to the grave errors in doctrine, training and tactics of the French army described in the previous chapter, and to the unsound strategic dispositions of General Joffre. But more than four-fifths of the French losses were sustained in the First Shock. In the fighting from August 21, when the main collision occurred, down to September 12, when the victory of the Marne was definitely accomplished (a period of scarcely three weeks), the French armies lost nearly 330,000 men killed or prisoners, or more than one-sixth of their total loss in killed or prisoners during the whole fifty-two months of the war. To these permanent losses should be added about 280,000 wounded, making a total for this brief period of over 600,000 casualties to the French armies alone; and of this terrific total three-fourths of the loss was inflicted from August 21 to 24, and from September 5 to 9, that is to say, in a period of less than eight days.

Nothing comparable to this concentrated slaughter was sustained by any combatant in so short a time, not even excluding the first Russian disasters, nor the final phase on the Western Front in 1918. That the French army should have survived this frightful butchery, the glaring miscalculations which caused it, and the long and harassed retreats by which it was attended, and yet should have retained the fighting qualities which rendered a sublime recovery possible, is the greatest proof of their martial fortitude and devotion which History will record. Had this heroic army been handled in the First Shock with prudence, on a wise strategic scheme, and with practical knowledge of the effects of modern firearms and the use of barbed wire and entrenchments, there is no reason to doubt that the German invasion could have

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Officiel Documents Parlementaires*, Mars 29, 1920. } See Appendix J  
<sup>2</sup> *Military Effort of the British Empire*, Monthly Returns. } for details.  
<sup>3</sup> German Federal Archives (*Reichsarchiv*).

been brought to a standstill after suffering enormous losses within from thirty to fifty kilometres of the French frontiers. Instead, as events were cast, the French army in the first few weeks of the war received wounds which were nearly fatal, and never curable.

Of these the gravest was the loss of regular regimental officers, who sacrificed themselves with unbounded devotion. In many battalions only two or three officers survived the opening battles. The cadres of the whole French Army were seriously injured by the wholesale destruction of the trained professional element. The losses which the French suffered in the years which followed were undoubtedly aggravated by this impoverishment of military knowledge in the fighting units. Although the Germans are accustomed to bewail their own heavy losses of officers in the opening battles, their injury was not so deep, and until after the Ludendorff offensives they always possessed the necessary professional staff to teach and handle successive intakes of recruits.

After the situation was stabilized at the end of November, the long period of Siege warfare on the Western Front began. The Germans fortified themselves on French and Belgian soil, along a line chosen for its superior railway network, and the Allies for more than three years endeavoured, with unvarying failure, to break their front and force them to retreat.

In all, five great Allied assaults were made.

(i) By the French in Champagne and Artois in the spring and early summer of 1915.

(ii) By the French in Champagne during the late autumn and winter of 1915, and by the British simultaneously at Loos.

(iii) By the British and French on the Somme from July to October, 1916.

(iv) By the British at Arras and by the French on the Aisne, from April to July, 1917, and

(v) By the British virtually alone at Passchendaele in the autumn and winter of 1917.

In these siege-offensives which occupied the years 1915, 1916 and 1917 the French and British Armies consumed themselves in vain, and suffered as will be seen nearly double the casualties inflicted on the Germans. In this same period the Germans made only one great counter-offensive stroke: Falkenhayn's prolonged attack on Verdun in the spring of 1916. The special features which this operation presented will be related in their place.

These sanguinary prodigious struggles, extending over many months, are often loosely described as 'Battles.' Judging by the number of men who took their turn in the fighting at different times, by the immense quantities of guns and shells employed, and by the hideous casualty totals, they certainly rank, taken each as a whole, among the largest events of military history. But we must



not be misled by terminology. If to call them 'battles' were merely a method of presenting a general view of an otherwise confusing picture, it might well pass unchallenged. But an attempt has been made by military Commanders and by a whole school of writers to represent these prolonged operations, as events comparable to the decisive battles of the past, only larger and more important. To yield to this specious argument is to be drawn into a wholly wrong impression, both of military science and of what actually took place in the Great War.

What is a battle? I wrote on March 5, 1918: 'War between equals in power . . . should be a succession of climaxes on which everything is staked, toward which everything tends and from which permanent decisions are obtained. These climaxes have usually been called battles. A battle means that the whole of the resources on either side that can be brought to bear are, during the course of a single episode, concentrated upon the enemy.' The scale of a battle must bear due proportion to the whole fighting strength of the armies. Five divisions engaged out of an army of seven may fight a battle. But the same operation in an army of seventy divisions, although the suffering and slaughter are equal, sinks to the rank of a petty combat. A succession of such combats augments the losses without raising the scale of events.

Moreover, a battle cannot, properly speaking, be considered apart from the time factor. By overwhelming the enemy's right we place ourselves in a position to attack the exposed flank or rear of his centre; or by piercing his centre we gain the possibility of rolling up his flanks; or by capturing a certain hill we command his lines of communication. But none of these consequential advantages will be gained if the time taken in the preliminary operation is so long that the enemy can make new dispositions—if, for instance, he can bend back his lines on each side of the rupture and fortify them, or if he can withdraw his army before the hill is taken which would command his communications. If he has time to take such measures effectively, the first battle is over; and the second stage involves a second battle. Now the amount of time required by the enemy is not indefinite. One night is enough to enable a new position to be entrenched and organized. In forty-eight hours the railways can bring large reinforcements of men and guns to any threatened point. The attacker is confronted with a new situation, a different problem, a separate battle. It is a misnomer to describe the resumption of an attack in these different circumstances as a part of the original battle, or to describe a series of such disconnected efforts as one prolonged battle. Operations consisting of detached episodes extending over months and divided by intervals during which a series of entirely new situations are created, however great their

scale, cannot be compared—to take some modern instances—with Blenheim, Rossbach, Austerlitz, Waterloo, Gettysburg, Sedan, the Marne, or Tannenberg.

The real Battle crises of the Great War stand out from the long series of partial, though costly, operations, not only by the casualties but by the number of divisions simultaneously engaged on both sides. In 1914, during the four days from August 21 to 24 inclusive, 80 German divisions were engaged with 62 French, 4 British and 6 Belgian divisions. The four decisive days of the Marne, September 6 to 9 inclusive, involved approximately the same numbers. Practically all the reserves were thrown in on both sides, and the whole strength of the armies utilized to the utmost. The operations in Artois in the spring of 1915, which lasted three months and cost the French 450,000 men,<sup>1</sup> never presented a single occasion where more than 15 divisions were simultaneously engaged on either side. The Battle of Loos-Champagne, beginning on September 25, 1915, comprised an attack by 44 French and 15 British divisions (total 59) upon approximately 30 German divisions. But within three days the decisive battle-period may be said to have passed, and the numbers engaged on the Anglo-French side were reduced rapidly. 1916 was occupied by Verdun and the Somme. In this year of almost continuous fighting, in which more than two and a half million British, French and German soldiers were killed or wounded, there is only one single day, July 1, on the Somme, where as many as 22 Allied divisions were engaged simultaneously. The rest of the Somme with all its slaughter contained no operations involving more than 18 Allied divisions, and in most cases the time was occupied by combats between 3 or 4 British or French divisions with less than half that number of the enemy. In the whole of the so-called 'Battle of Verdun' there were never engaged on any single day more than 14 French and German divisions, and the really critical opening attack by which the fate of the Fortress was so nearly sealed was conducted by not more than 6 German divisions against 2 or 3 French. In 1917, with the accession of General Nivelle to the French command, an attempt was made to launch a decisive operation, and the French engaged in a single day, though with disastrous results, as many as 28 divisions. Thereafter the operations dwindled again into sanguinary insignificance. The Autumn fighting in Flanders by the British Army produced a long succession of attacks delivered only by from 5 to 15 British divisions.

<sup>1</sup> This figure and other similar figures include the normal wastage of trench warfare on the quiet portions of the front. The official statistics do not enable me to distinguish between the actual battle front and the ordinary front. A uniform deduction of one-eighth would probably be sufficiently correct in all cases.

I wrote in October, 1917 (the reader will come to it in its proper place): 'Success will only be achieved by the *scale and intensity* of our offensive effort within a limited period. We are seeking to conquer the enemy's army and not his position. . . . A policy of pure attrition between armies so evenly balanced cannot lead to a decision. It is not a question of wearing down the enemy's reserves, but of wearing them down so rapidly that recovery and replacement of shattered divisions is impossible. . . . Unless this problem can be solved satisfactorily, we shall simply be wearing each other out on a gigantic scale and with fearful sacrifices without ever reaping the reward.'

It was not until March 21, 1918, when the third and final phase of the war began, that Ludendorff reintroduced the great battle period. The mass of artillery, which the Germans had by then accumulated in the West, was sufficient to enable three or four great offensives to be mounted simultaneously against the Allies, and the power to release any one of these at will imparted the element of Surprise to Ludendorff's operations. The great reserves of which he disposed and which he used, after four years of carnage, with all the ruthlessness of the first invasion, carried the struggle leap by leap along the whole Western Front, until the entire structure of the opposing armies and all their organizations of attack and defence were strained to the utmost. The climax of the German effort was reached in July. Ludendorff had worn out his army in the grand manner, but thoroughly, and the Allied offensive, supported by an equally numerous artillery, then began. As this developed all the armies became involved in constantly moving battles, and nearly 90 Allied divisions were on numerous days simultaneously engaged with 70 or 80 German. Thus at last a decision was reached.

The fundamental proportion of events which the foregoing facts and figures reveal, is more apparent if weeks instead of days are taken as the test. Let us therefore multiply the number of divisions by the number of days in which they were actively engaged in any given week. The 'Battle of the Frontiers' shows from August 21 to 28 about 600 division-battle days. The week of the Marne, September 5 to 12, shows a total of nearly 500. The week of Loos-Champagne in 1915, September 25 to October 2, produces a total of approximately 100. The continuous battle intensity of the first week of Verdun is only 72 divisions and never again attained that level. The opening week of the Somme, also the most important, is 46. General Nivelle's attack in April, 1917, engaged in a week 135. Passchendaele never rose above 85 division-battle days in a single week. With Ludendorff in 1918 we reach the figure of 328 between March 21 and 28. All through the summer of 1918 the weeks repeatedly show 300 entries by divisions

of all the armies into battle: and finally, Foch's general advance, August, September and October, attained the maximum intensity of 554 divisional engagements a week and maintained an average weekly intensity in the fiercest month of over 400.

\* \* \* \* \*

I conceive myself entitled to repeat, now that the results are known, the opinions which I put on record before all these battles were fought. I wrote to the Prime Minister on December 29, 1914, as follows: 'I think it quite possible that neither side will have the strength to penetrate the other's lines in the Western theatre . . . Without attempting to take a final view, my impression is that the position of both armies is not likely to undergo any decisive change.' And in June, 1915: 'It is a fair general conclusion that the deadlock in the West will continue for some time and the side which risks most to pierce the lines of the other will put itself at a disadvantage.'

When the Comte de Ségur wrote his captivating account of Napoleon's Russian campaign, the defence of the Emperor was undertaken by General Gourgaud, a highly placed officer of his staff, which defence produced a far less favourable impression of Napoleon than had resulted from the original criticism. In 1922 a book entitled *Sir Douglas Haig's Command 1915-1918* was published by a member of his staff, Lieut-Colonel J. H. Boraston. This gentleman was employed during the greater part of the period concerned in drafting and preparing the official communiqués. He thus had access to many forms of confidential information, and he watched the great events of the war in relationship to a chief who had gained his whole-hearted admiration. His work is aggressive to a degree that sometimes ceases to be good-natured. It is marred by small recriminations, by an air of soreness, by a series of literary sniffs and snorts, which combine to produce an unpleasant impression on the mind of the general reader.

For the views expressed in this book Sir Douglas Haig is in no way responsible. But the point of view which it discloses is nevertheless of interest. With all its faults, indeed to some extent because of them, *Sir Douglas Haig's Command* is a document of real value. It represents and embodies more effectively the collective view of the British Headquarters upon the different phases of the struggle than any other work which has yet appeared. There are none of those reticences and suave phrasings with which the successful actors on the world-stage are often contented when they condescend to tell their tale. Here we have the record of actual feelings unadorned. We have also a wealth of secret information for the first time placed at the

disposal of the public in a responsible and authentic form. The public are therefore under an obligation to Colonel Boraston, and it from time to time in these pages his views are treated somewhat controversially, that should in no way obscure the service he has rendered to every one except his Chief.

This Staff Officer is throughout concerned to sustain the theme of Sir Douglas Haig's final despatch. The Western Front was at all times, according to this view, the decisive theatre of the war, and all the available forces should continually have been concentrated there. The only method of waging war on the Western Front was by wearing down the enemy by 'killing Germans in a war of attrition.' This we are assured was always Sir Douglas Haig's scheme; he pursued it unswervingly throughout his whole Command. Whether encouraged or impeded by the Cabinet, his policy was always the same: 'Gather together every man and gun and wear down the enemy by constant and if possible by ceaseless attacks.' This in the main, it is contended, he succeeded in doing, with the result, it is claimed, that in August, 1918, the enemy, at last worn down, lost heart, crumpled, and finally sued for peace. Viewing the events in retrospect, Colonel Boraston invites us to see, not only each of the various prolonged offensives as an integral operation, but the whole four years, 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918, as if they were one single enormous battle every part of which was a necessary factor in the final victory. We wore the enemy down, we are told, upon the Somme in 1916, we wore him down at Arras in the spring, we continued to wear him down at Passchendaele in the winter of 1917. If the army had been properly reinforced by the politicians we should have persisted in wearing him down in the spring of 1918. Finally, as the fruits of all this process of attrition and 'killing Germans' by offensive operations, the enemy's spirit was quelled, his man power was exhausted, and the war was won. Thus a great design, measured, foreseen and consciously prepared, reached its supreme accomplishment. Such is the theory.

These views are supported in the two important volumes published by Sir William Robertson. This officer was Chief of the Imperial General Staff with unprecedented powers during the whole of 1916 and 1917. Robertson's doctrines were clear and consistent. He believed in concentrating all the efforts of the British and French armies upon offensive action in France and Flanders, and that we should stand on the defensive everywhere else. He advocated and pressed every offensive in which the British armies were engaged, and did his utmost to procure the compliance of the Cabinet in every operation. In an illuminating sentence he complained that 'certain Ministers still held fast to the belief that victory could never be won—or only at prohibitive

cost—by *straightforward action on the Western Front*,<sup>1</sup> and that it must be sought through lines of indirect attack elsewhere.” ‘Straightforward action on the Western Front,’ in 1915 (when Robertson was Chief of the Staff in France) and in 1916 and 1917 (when he was C.I.G.S.), meant, and could only mean, frontal assaults upon fortified positions defended by wire and machine guns without the necessary superiority of numbers, or an adequate artillery, or any novel offensive method. He succeeded in enforcing this policy against the better judgment of successive Cabinets or War Councils, with the result that when he left the War Office in February, 1918, the British and French armies were at their weakest point in strength and fighting power, and the Germans for the first time since the original invasion had gathered so great a superiority of reserves as to be able to launch a gigantic attack.

Robertson's explanations of the costly failures of the successive offensives for which he was so largely responsible are worth quoting. Of the disastrous battles of Loos and Champagne which cost the French 350,000 casualties and the British 95,000 in September and October, 1915, he writes:

‘Although the operations were unproductive of decisive success, and were attended by tactical miscalculations which would have to be corrected before the enemy's lines could be breached, they nevertheless rendered valuable aid to an ally in distress, and furnished useful experience in the handling of new troops and in the methods to be employed in the attack on continuous lines of field fortifications. They were, in fact, necessary stages in the preparation for the great battles that were subsequently fought.’

To obtain ‘useful experience in the handling of new troops’ and educational preparation for future battles may be deemed an inadequate result for 95,000 British casualties.

During the battle of the Somme he wrote, on July 20, to Haig as follows:

‘The powers that be are beginning to get a little uneasy in regard to the situation. The casualties are mounting up, and Ministers are wondering whether we are likely to get a proper return for them. I do my best to keep the general situation to the front, and to explain what may be the effect of our efforts, and to ask what alternative could be adopted. I also try to make them think in German of the present situation. But they will persist in asking me whether I think a loss of, say, 300,000 men will lead to really great results, because if not we ought to be content with something less than what we are

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

<sup>2</sup> *Soldiers and Statesmen*, 1914-18: Robertson. Vol. I, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 70.

now doing, and they constantly inquire why we are fighting and the French are not . . . In general, what is bothering them is the probability that we may soon have to face a bill of between 200,000 and 300,000 casualties with no very great gains additional to the present. It is thought that the primary object—the relief of Verdun—has to some extent been achieved.”<sup>1</sup>

And three days later:

‘L.G. is all right provided I can say that *I* am satisfied, and to enable me to say this it is necessary you should keep me acquainted with your views. . . . If I have to depend almost entirely upon Press communiqués my opinion is not much more valuable than that of anyone else.”<sup>2</sup>

But his was the opinion that overbore all others; and that it should have depended upon these and similar jejune reflections and on such defective information excites, even after the lapse of years, a painful emotion.

When on October 5, 1917, the Passchendaele offensive was sinking into the mire, and the Cabinet sought to bring it to a conclusion, Robertson was compelled to rest himself upon ‘the unsatisfactory state of the French armies and of the general political situation in France, which was still far from reassuring’;<sup>3</sup> and again: ‘The original object of the campaign—the clearance of the Belgian coast—was seen to be doubtful of attainment long before the operations terminated, owing to the bad weather experienced and to the delay in starting caused by the change of plan earlier in the year. But, as already explained, there were strong reasons why activity had to be maintained. We must give the French armies time to recover their strength and morale, make every effort to keep Russia in the field in some form or other, and try to draw enemy troops to Flanders which might otherwise be sent against Italy, especially after her defeat at Caporetto. All these purposes of distraction were achieved, and in addition heavy losses were inflicted upon the German armies.’<sup>4</sup>

For these ‘purposes of distraction’ the killing, maiming or capture of over 400,000 British soldiers was apparently considered a reasonable price to pay.

It appears however that although Robertson drove the Cabinet remorselessly forward, he had convinced himself that none of the British attacks for which he bore responsibility in 1915 and in 1916 had had any chance of decisive success. ‘With respect to the alleged error of always attacking where the enemy was strongest,’

<sup>1</sup> *Soldiers and Statesmen, 1914-1918*: Robertson. Vol. I, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 256.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol II, pp. 261-2.

he writes,<sup>1</sup> 'I could not refrain from saying that the greatest of all errors was that of not providing before the war an army adequate to enforce the policy adopted. . . . *Until this year we have not had the means to attack with the hope of getting a decision,*<sup>2</sup> and therefore we have had no choice in the point of attack.' He used these words on his own avowal on June 21, 1917; so that the highest expert authority responsible for procuring the support of the Cabinet to two years of offensive operations had already convinced himself that up till 1917 the British Army 'had not the means to attack with the hope of getting a decision.' Undeterred however by this slowly-gained revelation, he proceeded to drive the unfortunate Ministers to authorize the prolongation into the depths of winter of the Passchendaele offensive.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the war it was the custom of the British and French staffs to declare that in their offensives they were inflicting far heavier losses on the Germans than they themselves suffered. Similar claims were advanced by the enemy. Ludendorff shared the professional outlook of the British and French High Commands. Even after the war was over, with all the facts in his mind or at his disposal had he cared to seek them, we find him writing, 'Of the two [policies], the offensive makes less demands on the men and gives no higher losses.'<sup>3</sup> Let us subject these assertions and theories of the military schools of the three great belligerents to a blood test as pitiless as that to which they all in turn doomed their valiant soldiers.

Since the Armistice the facts are known; but before proceeding to detailed figures it will be well to take a general survey.

The Germans, out of a population of under 70 millions, mobilized during the war for military service 13½ million persons. Of these, according to the latest German official figures for all fronts including the Russian, over 7 millions suffered death, wounds or captivity, of whom nearly 2 millions perished.<sup>4</sup> France, with a population of 38 millions, mobilized a little over 8 million persons. This however includes a substantial proportion of African troops outside the French population basis. Of these approximately 5 millions became casualties, of whom 1½ millions lost their lives. The British Empire, out of a white population of 60 millions, mobilized nearly 9½ million persons and sustained over 3 million casualties including nearly a million deaths.

The British totals are not directly comparable with those of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> My italics.

<sup>3</sup> *My War Memories*: Ludendorff. Vol. II.

<sup>4</sup> *Zentral Nachweiseamt*. This figure is also given by the French military historian, Lieut.-Colonel Corda, *La Guerre Mondiale*, p. 413.



France and Germany. The proportion of coloured troops is greater. The numbers who fell in theatres other than the western, and those employed on naval service, are both much larger.

The French and German figures are however capable of very close comparison. Both the French and German armies fought with their whole strength from the beginning to the end of the war. Each nation made the utmost possible demand upon its population. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the official French and German figures tally with considerable exactness. The Germans mobilized 19 per cent. of their entire population, and the French, with their important African additions, 21 per cent. Making allowance for the African factor, it would appear that in the life-and-death struggle both countries put an equal strain upon their manhood. If this basis is sound—and it certainly appears reasonable—the proportion of French and German casualties to persons mobilized displays an even more remarkable concordance. The proportion of German casualties to total mobilized is 10 out of every 19, and that of the French 10 out of every 16. The ratios of deaths to woundings in Germany and France are almost exactly equal, viz. 2 to 5. Finally these figures yield a division of German losses between the western and all other fronts of approximately 3 to 1 both in deaths and casualties. All the calculations which follow are upon the basis of the tables which yield these authoritative and harmonious general proportions.

The British War Office published in March, 1922, its *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*.<sup>1</sup> A section of this massive compilation records the comparative figures of British and German casualties on the British sector of the Western Front from February, 1915, to October, 1918, inclusive. The British figures are compiled from the official records of the War Office. The German figures have been obtained from the Federal Archives Office at Potsdam. The result of the calculation is summed up as follows: The total number of British 'Officer' casualties was 115,741 and of German 'Officer' casualties 47,256. The total number of British 'Other Ranks' casualties was 2,325,932 and of German 'Other Ranks' casualties 1,633,140. The casualties among British 'Officers' compared to German were therefore about 5 to 2, and of British 'Other Ranks' compared to German about 3 to 2.

Comparative tables are given in the same work which show the losses of both sides in the various offensive periods.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as *The Military Effort*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Military Effort*, pp. 358 et seq.

# THE BLOOD TEST

## BRITISH OFFENSIVES OF 1916 AND 1917

		OFFICERS <sup>1</sup>		OTHER RANKS	
		British.	German.	British.	German.
1916					
July-December					
THE SOMME	...	21,974	4,879	459,868	231,315
		over 4-1		about 2-1	
1917					
January-June					
ARRAS and	...	15,198	3,953	295,803	172,962
MESSINES		about 4-1		about 5-3	
1917					
July-December					
PASSCHENDAELE ...		22,316	6,913	426,298	263,797
and CAMBRAI		about 3-1		about 5-3	
TOTALS ...	...	59,488	15,745	1,181,969	668,074
		about 4-1		nearly 2-1	

There is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of these authoritative and official calculations, nor the truth of the picture they present. But since 1918 supplementary casualty returns have been presented both in Germany and Britain which must be brought into the account. They do not materially alter the picture.<sup>2</sup> The two tables printed *after this page* show in their

<sup>1</sup> The German commissioned officers were less numerous per unit than in the British Service.

<sup>2</sup> The campaigns have been divided into the main operations and the intervening periods, in accordance with the return of French casualties presented to the Chamber in response to the resolution obtained by the deputy Marin on March 29, 1922. The French figures are taken from this source, which is the latest and sole authoritative statement of the French casualties. The British figures are taken from the monthly returns of casualties published in *The Military Effort*.<sup>\*</sup> These are the official figures of the War Office, and the final corrections and additions† are also embodied.

For the German figures there are two sources: first, the Federal Archives Office at Potsdam (*Reichsarchiv*) which collected the casualties returned every ten days by the units; and secondly, the Central Inquiry Office (*Zentral Nachweisamt*) which, working separately, received the periodical returns from all the hospitals at the front and at home. The classification of the casualties into periods is the work of the *Reichsarchiv*. They accepted the figures as recorded at the end of the war, and have classified them in the same operation periods as those chosen by the French. The Central Enquiry Office, which includes the War Graves Administration, continued however to revise the casualty returns, and in particular to break up the large category of 'Missing' which existed at the end of the war. As missing men were finally despaired of or proved to have been killed, as wounded

<sup>\*</sup> p. 271.

† pp. 237 et seq.

# A. LOSSES ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

(Killed, died in hospital, missing, prisoners and wounded, including officers.)

Period <sup>1</sup>	Description.	SUFFERED		
		BY GERMANS.	FRENCH.	BRITISH.
Aug.-Nov., 1914	Battle of the Frontiers (Aug. 6-Sept. 3) and Battle of the Marne (Sept. 6-13). The race to the sea (1st battle of Aisles, the Yser). <i>British: 1st Ypres.</i>	677,440	854,000	84,575
Dec., 1914-Jan., 1915	Stabilization	170,025	254,000	17,621
Feb.-Mar., 1915	1st offensive of 1915 (1st battle of Champagne)	114,492	240,000	33,678
Apr.-June, 1915	2nd battle of Aisles. <i>British: 2nd Ypres</i>	283,506	449,000	119,537
July-Aug., 1915	Stabilization	78,402	193,000	30,962
Sept.-Nov., 1915	2nd and offensive of 1915 (2nd battle of Champagne, 3rd battle of Aisles). <i>British: Loos</i>	186,188	410,000	94,787
Dec., 1915-Jan., 1916	Stabilization	39,703	78,000	25,092
Feb.-June, 1916	Defensive battle of Verdun	334,246	442,000	118,992
July-Oct., 1916	Battle of the Somme	537,919	341,000	453,238
Nov.-Dec., 1916	1st offensive battle of Verdun	92,273	93,000	69,041
Jan.-Mar., 1917	The German retreat	65,381	108,000	67,217
April-July, 1917	Offensive of the Aisne (Chemain-des-Dames, and battle of the Mounts). <i>British: Arras, Messines</i>	414,071	279,000	355,928
Aug.-Dec., 1917	Minor operations (Flanders, right bank of the Meuse, the Malmesdon). <i>British: Passchendaele, Cambrai</i>	404,517	182,000	394,645
Jan.-Feb., 1918	Stabilization	24,064	51,000	22,851
March-June, 1918	Defensive campaign of 1918. <i>British: March 21, Lys</i>	688,341	483,000	418,374
July-Nov., 1918	Offensive campaign of 1918.	785,733	531,000	411,636
	TOTALS	4,846,000 <sup>2</sup>	4,938,000 <sup>3</sup>	2,706,000 <sup>4</sup>
Four fifths of 494,000 German casualties reported after Armistice: and British additional		397,000		52,000
Casualties inflicted by Americans say		140,000		
French officers killed not included in periods			36,000	
	FINAL TOTALS	5,383,000 <sup>5</sup>	4,974,000	2,758,000 <sup>5</sup>
Of which (a) Deaths (killed, died in hospital, permanently missing)		1,493,000 <sup>7</sup>	1,432,000	684,000
(b) Non-fatal casualties		3,890,000	3,506,000	2,074,000
Ratios of (a) to (b)		1 to 2.60	1 to 2.45	1 to 3.03

<sup>1</sup> One eighth may be deducted from all figures on both sides for casualties on parts of the front other than the battle fronts in each period.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Archives (*Reichsarchiv*), Potsdam, Dec. 31, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> Official Returns to the Chamber, Resolution of Deputy Marin, March 29, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Military Effort of the British Empire. Monthly Returns, p. 253 to 271.

<sup>5</sup> A small percentage, probably less than 2 per cent., may be deducted from the British casualty totals in each period to allow for a more thorough recording than appears in the German figures of very slightly wounded men who remained at duty.

<sup>6</sup> Add German casualties suffered on Russian and other fronts, viz., 1,697,000, making German total loss 7,080,000, of which Deaths, 2,000,000.

<sup>7</sup> For method of estimating this figure see Appendix J. Table III.

**B. LOSSES ON THE WESTERN FRONT.<sup>1</sup>**  
*(Killed, died in hospital, missing, prisoners and wounded, including officers).*

Period.	Description.	INFLECTED		
		by GERMANS.	FRENCH.	BRITISH.
Aug.-Nov., 1914	Battle of the Frontiers (Aug. 6-Sept. 5) and Battle of the Marne (Sept. 5-13). The race to the sea (1st battle of Aisles, the Year). <i>British: 1st Ypres.</i>	938,575	747,465	say 100,000
Dec.-Jan., 1915	Stabilization	271,631	86,002	18,490
Feb.-March	1st offensive of 1915 (1st battle of Champagne)	273,173	190,520	43,036
April-June	2nd battle of Aisles. <i>British: 2nd Ypres</i>	503,557	66,785	11,617
July-August	Stabilization	223,902		
Sept.-Nov.	2nd offensive of 1915 (2nd battle of Champagne, 3rd battle of Aisles). <i>British: Loos</i>	504,787	154,139	32,049
Dec.-Jan., 1916	Stabilization	100,092	28,933	10,769
Feb.-June	Defensive battle of Verdun	560,992	278,739	55,307
July-Oct.	Battle of the Somme	794,533	338,911	199,908
Nov.-Dec.	1st offensive battle of Verdun	153,041	56,037	36,236
Jan.-March, 1917	The German retreat	175,217	30,183	35,198
April-July	Offensive of the Aisne (Clermont-Dames, and battle of the Mounts). <i>British: Arras, Messines</i>	634,928	238,310	175,771
Aug.-Dec.	Minor operations (Flanders, right bank of the Meuse, the Malmesdon). <i>British: Passchendaele, Cambrai</i>	576,645	167,381	237,136
Jan.-Feb., 1918	Stabilization	73,853	12,230	11,834
March-June	Defensive campaign of 1918. <i>British: March 21, Lys</i>	831,374	253,204	435,137
July-Nov.	Offensive campaign of 1918	942,636	414,617	371,116
	TOTALS	7,644,000 <sup>2</sup>	3,072,000	1,774,000

*Not included above.*

Additional British and German losses reported after Armistice and not classified by months or fronts

French officers killed (not distributed) 52,000 494,000

American losses 36,000 —

Belgian losses 302,000 —

<sup>1</sup> Authorities and deductions as on previous table.

<sup>2</sup> No figures are included for the enormous casualties inflicted by the Germans on the Russians nor for those inflicted by the British on the Turks.

simplest form the respective total casualties suffered and inflicted according to the latest information by all the three main combatants on the Western Front. It would not be right to claim for any elaborate set of figures built up under such varying circumstances an exact and meticulous accuracy; nor is such exactness necessary for the use to which the figures are put in this account. The authority for every set of figures is given. All the modifications which are required have been made, and in the result I believe it to be a sound and correct presentation of fact.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us now proceed to draw the conclusions which emerge from the figures. They do not appear to have been at all appreciated even in the most expert circles. I state them in their simplest form.

During the whole war the Germans never lost in any phase of the fighting more than the French whom they fought, and frequently inflicted double casualties upon them. In no one of the periods into which the fighting has been divided by the French authorities, did the French come off best in killed, prisoners and wounded. Whether they were on the defensive or were the attackers the result was the same. Whether in the original rush of the invasion, or in the German offensive at Verdun, or in the

men after long illness died, these were added to the total deaths, and the other categories reduced accordingly. Moreover the revision of casualties in accordance with the hospital records increased the total number. In five successive estimates ending with June, 1923, the *Nachweiseamt* added 497,000 casualties to the total at the Armistice, on which the *Reichsarchiv* had worked; and their final figure becomes 7,080,000 German casualties on all fronts out of a total mobilization of 13,250,000.

It is not possible to distribute these additional German casualties according to the time or operation periods of the *Reichsarchiv's* calculation; nor to divide them between the Western and Eastern theatres of the war. In order to make sure that I am in no way overstraining the argument, I have added four-fifths of the 497,000 supplementary German casualties, viz. 397,000, to the Western Front. This is admittedly an arbitrary method. But in so far as it errs, it is upon the safe side. Moreover, the *Reichsarchiv's* figures for the Western Front admittedly do not include either casualties inflicted upon the Germans by the Americans, which may be estimated at 140,000; nor the very heavy German casualties for part of October and the last eleven days of the war in November, 1918. In the confusion of the collapse on the Western Front a temporary breakdown occurred in the returns made by the various German units. This is the chief explanation of the increase of nearly 500,000 discovered and reported by the Central Enquiry Office in the following twelve months.

It does not seem therefore that the additional 397,000 German casualties should be spread over the whole period of the war. By far the larger portion occurred in the last few months. If uniform allowance were made for this addition, it would increase all the German figures in the comparative tables by about 8 per cent. But the British figures in these tables have also undergone a progressive revision. Allowing for the fact that they do not include 102,000 British casualties of 1914, their original total fell short of the British final total by 222,000. This number, if distributed, would add almost exactly the same percentage to the British numbers. The effect of these changes therefore leaves the comparison unaltered.

great French assaults on the German line, or even in the long periods of wastage on the trench warfare front, it always took the blood of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 Frenchmen to inflict a corresponding injury upon a German.

The second fact which presents itself from the tables is that in all the British offensives the British casualties were never less than 3 to 2, and often nearly double the corresponding German losses.

However, comparing the French and British efforts against the Germans on the Western Front, the French suffered in all the periods concerned irrespective of the kind of operation heavier losses than those they inflicted on the enemy: whereas while the British suffered heavier losses in all offensives, they exacted more than their own losses when attacked by the Germans.

In the series of great offensive pressures which Joffre delivered during the whole of the spring and autumn of 1915, the French suffered nearly 1,300,000 casualties. They inflicted upon the Germans in the same period and the same operations 506,000 casualties. They gained no territory worth mentioning, and no strategic advantages of any kind. This was the worst year of the Joffre régime. Gross as were the mistakes of the Battle of the Frontiers, glaring as had been the errors of the First Shock, they were eclipsed by the insensate obstinacy and lack of comprehension which, without any large numerical superiority, without adequate artillery or munitions, without any novel mechanical method, without any pretence of surprise or manoeuvre, without any reasonable hope of victory, continued to hurl the heroic but limited manhood of France at the strongest entrenchments, at uncut wire and innumerable machine guns served with cold skill. The responsibilities of this lamentable phase must be shared in a subordinate degree by Foch, who under Joffre's orders, but as an ardent believer, conducted the prolonged Spring offensive in Artois, the most sterile and prodigal of all.

During the Somme in 1916, where the brunt of the slaughter was borne by the British, the French and German losses were much less unequal. But, on the other hand, their rigid method of defence at Verdun, which will be presently described, led the French to suffer in a far greater degree even than the attacking Germans.

In the face of the official figures now published and set out in the tables, what becomes of the argument of the 'battle of attrition'? If we lose three or four times as many officers and nearly twice as many men in our attack as the enemy in his defence, how are we wearing him down? The result of every one of these offensives was to leave us relatively weaker—and in some

casualties terribly weaker—than the enemy. The aggregate result of all of them from 1915 to 1917 (after deducting the losses on both sides in the German attack on Verdun) was a French and British casualty list of 4,123,000 compared to a German total of 2,166,000. Not only is this true of numbers, but also of the quality of the troops. In the attack it is the bravest who fall. The loss is heaviest among the finest and most audacious fighters. In defence the casualties are spread evenly throughout the total number exposed to the fire. The process of attrition was at work; but it was on our own side that its ravages fell, and not on the German.

It may be contended that if one side is much more numerous than the other it may 'wear down' the enemy, as Grant sought vainly to wear down the Confederates before Richmond in 1864, even at a cost of two to one. But this argument cannot be applied to the struggle on the Western Front. First, the Allies never had the superiority to afford such an uneven sacrifice of life. Secondly, the German annual intake of recruits was large enough to repair the whole of their permanent loss in any year.

Let us here examine the total German losses on the Western Front.

#### Casualties inflicted on the Germans<sup>1</sup>

			by			
			British.	French. <sup>2</sup>	Total.	
1914	...	(say)	100,000	748,000 <sup>3</sup>	848,000	
1915	...	...	116,000	536,000	652,000	
1916	...	...	291,000	673,000	964,000	
1917	...	...	448,000	436,000	884,000	
1918	...	...	818,000	680,000	1,498,000	
Total	...	...	1,773,000	3,072,000	4,846,000 <sup>4</sup>	

From the tables of killed, missing, prisoners and wounded it is necessary to extract the permanent loss to the Army, i.e. men rendered incapable of taking any further part in the war. For this purpose we include all the killed, missing and prisoners and one-third only of the wounded. On this basis the total permanent German loss in the West during the three years of siege warfare was as follows:—

1915	...	...	...	...	...	337,000
1916	...	...	...	...	...	549,000
1917	...	...	...	...	...	510,000
Total	...	...	...	...	...	1,396,000 <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Table B.

<sup>2</sup> Including losses inflicted by the Belgians.

<sup>3</sup> 100,000 deducted for British share, no separate figures being available.

<sup>4</sup> These figures take no account of the supplementary German casualties not distributed into periods.

<sup>5</sup> No allowance is made in these figures for the supplementary German casualties, since these could at most vary the totals to the extent of 8 per cent. See footnotes to p. 962.

W 9.—1 (2)

Thus in the three years of siege conditions the losses of the Germans on the Western Front averaged 465,000 a year. Their annual intake of recruits through young men growing up was over 800,000. But, in their hard need, and often through the ardour of their young men, they heavily anticipated their annual harvests. From May, the normal conscription month, to the end of 1915, they drew 1,070,000 men to the Colours.<sup>1</sup> In the similar period of 1916 they overdrew no less than 1,443,000 men. Thus, in 1917 they could call up only 622,000. Nevertheless, the least of these figures far exceeded the attrition value of the Allied offensives. It was not until 1918 that the intake of available Germans fell to 405,000. It would probably, if the national resistance had not collapsed, have risen in 1919, for the ample crops of German youth were steadily coming forward at 800,000 a year. The figures of German loss and intake for the three Siege years are therefore as follows:—

		Loss in the West.	Total Intake.	Balance for all Fronts.
1915	...	337,000	1,070,000	733,000
1916	...	549,000	1,443,000	894,000
1917	...	510,000	622,000	112,000
<i>Totals</i>	...	1,396,000	3,135,000	1,739,000

Where then in mere attrition was the end to be discerned? On the terms of 1915, 1916, and 1917 the German man power was sufficient to last indefinitely. In fact in the three years of the Allied offensives on the Western front they gained actually to the extent of 1,739,000 men more than their losses. We were in fact, as I wrote early in March, 1918, 'merely exchanging lives upon a scale at once more frightful than anything that has been witnessed before in the world, and too modest to produce a decision.'<sup>2</sup>

It was not until 1918 that the change fatal for Germany occurred. There was one period in the warfare between the British and Germans in which the relative losses are strikingly reversed. That period is not, as the casual reader might expect, when our troops were gaining ground, storming trench lines, pulverizing fortified villages, gathering prisoners and the grisly spoils of battle, and when our propaganda, domestic and external, was eagerly proclaiming that the tide of victory flowed. It was during the period which probably in most people's minds represents the most agonizing and alarming phase of the war on the Western Front, the days of the greatest German victories and the most grievous

<sup>1</sup> These figures include sick and wounded who had recovered and men combed from industries.

<sup>2</sup> My memorandum on March 5, 1918, printed in Chapter XVI.



British reverses. For the first time in Ludendorff's tremendous offensive of 1918, in the battles following the twenty-first of March and in the battles of the Lys, the German losses in men and officers, in killed and wounded, especially killed, and above all in officers killed, towered up above those of the troops whom they thought they were defeating, and whom we knew they were driving back.

It was their own offensive, not ours, that consummated their ruin. They were worn down not by Joffre, Nivelle and Haig, but by Ludendorff. See again the remorseless figures from March 21, 1918, to the end of June.<sup>1</sup> In barely three months the Germans suffered against the British alone 16,000 officer casualties and 419,000 casualties among the other ranks. They lost in almost the same period<sup>2</sup> against the British alone, 3,860 officers killed compared with 3,878 officers killed by the British in the whole preceding two years. Against the French in the same three months, but mainly in the last five weeks, the Germans lost 253,000 officers and men. Their total casualties in only thirteen weeks amounted to 688,000, very few of whom in the short time that was left ever returned to the front. In this period their intake was reduced to 405,000 for the nine months of the year that the war lasted. Therefore they consumed nearly 700,000 men in a time when their corresponding intake did not exceed 150,000. Here then was the wearing down which, coming at the moment when the German national spirit was enfeebled by its exertions during four years and by the cumulative effects of the blockade, led to the German retreat on the Western Front; to the failure to make an effective withdrawal to the Antwerp-Meuse line with all the bargaining possibilities that this afforded, and to the sudden final collapse of German resistance in November, 1918.

But, it will be said, numerical attrition is not the only test, there is moral attrition which wears down the will power of an enemy who is constantly being attacked. He has to yield ground; he loses prisoners, guns, and trophies; he sees the strongest defences stormed; his battle line is constantly receding. It is this experience which wears him out in spite of the fact that he is killing two or often three assailants for each of his own men slain. It may be conceded that the ordeal of the defending troops in modern warfare is no less trying than that of the attacker. But after all there is no greater stimulus to the soldier in his agony than the knowledge of the loss he is inflicting on his foe. Crouched by his machine gun amid the awful bombardment he sees long lines mowed down, wave after wave, in hundreds and in thousands. He knows how few and far between are the defenders, he sees how

<sup>1</sup> *Military Effort*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Including the quiet month of July.

many are their targets. With every attack repulsed he gains fresh confidence, and when at last he is overwhelmed there are others behind him who know what is happening and which side is suffering most.

But let us test the theory of moral attrition also by the facts. Can it be disputed that the confidence of the German armies was increased as well as their relative numerical strength by the repulse of the British and French at Loos and Champagne in 1915? Did these battles induce them to weaken in any way their pressure upon Russia? Was it not during these very battles that German divisions conquered Serbia and overran the Balkans? Was not the German High Command at the height of the Somme offensive able to withdraw more than a dozen divisions from the various fronts to strike down Roumania? Which army exulted over the great Nivelle offensive in 1917? Who emerged with the greatest confidence from the prolonged fighting which followed the Battle of Arras? What were the relative positions of the British and German Armies at the end of Passchendaele—the British exhausted, shot to pieces, every division having to be reduced from thirteen to ten battalions; the Germans training, resting, gathering their reinforcements from Russia for a greater effort than any they had yet made?

It is certain, surveying the war as a whole, that the Germans were strengthened relatively by every Allied offensive—British or French—launched against them, until the summer of 1918. Had they not squandered their strength in Ludendorff's supreme offensive in 1918, there was no reason why they should not have maintained their front in France practically unaltered during the whole of the year, and retreated at their leisure during the winter no farther than the Meuse.

But, it will be said, if the conditions over a prolonged period are such that all offensives are equally injurious to the attacker, how then is war to be waged? Are both sides to sit down with enormous armies year after year looking at each other, each convinced that whoever attacks will be the loser? Is this the sterile conclusion to which the argument tends? What positive courses should have been adopted? No one need go so far as to say that every Allied offensive could have been avoided. Indeed, there were at least five examples of short sudden 'set piece' attacks—the opening of the battle of Arras, the capture of the Messines Ridge, the French recaptures of Fort Douaumont and of Malmaison, and the first day's battle of Cambrai—which in themselves were brilliant events. All of these, if they had ended with the fruits of the initial surprise, would have been more costly in men as well as in repute to the Germans than to the Allies. It is indeed by such episodes that the prestige of an 'active defensive'

might have been maintained. But the question is whether it was wise policy to seek and pursue prolonged offensives on the largest scale in order to wear down the enemy by attrition ; whether instead of seeking the offensive ourselves in France, both British and French ought not consistently on all occasions to have endeavoured to compel the enemy to attack. If our whole strategy and tactics had been directed to that end, would not the final victory have been sooner won?

Once the enemy was committed to the attack we could have exacted a cruel forfeit. It would have been his part, not ours, to crunch the barbed wire and gorge machine guns with the noblest sacrifices of youth. And need the tale have ended there? The use of force for the waging of war is not to be regulated simply by firm character and text-book maxims. Craft, foresight, deep comprehension of the verities, not only local but general ; stratagems, devices, manoeuvres, all of these on the grand scale are demanded from the chiefs of great armies.

Suppose we—both French and British—have trained our armies behind the trench line to a high standard of flexible manoeuvring efficiency ; suppose we have permanently fortified with concrete and every modern device those portions of the front where we cannot retreat ; suppose we have long selected and shrewdly weakened those portions where we could afford to give 20 or 30 kilometres of ground ; suppose we lure the enemy to attack there and make great pockets and bulges in a thin and yielding front, and then, just as he thinks himself pressing on to final victory, strike with independent counter-offensive on the largest scale and with deeply planned railways, not at his fortified trench line, but at the flanks of a moving, quivering line of battle! Are there not combinations here which at every stage would sell ground only subject to the full blood tax, and finally offer to brave, fresh, well-trained troops the opportunities of sudden and glorious victory?

And why should the view be limited to the theatre in which the best and largest armies happen to face each other? Sea power, railway communications, foreign policy, present the means of finding new flanks outside the area of deadlock. Mechanical science offers on the ground, in the air, on every coast, from the forge or from the laboratory, boundless possibilities of novelty and surprise. Suppose for instance the war power represented by the 450,000 French and British casualties in the Champagne-Loos battle of 1915 had been used to force the Dardanelles or to combine the Balkan States!

Let us, to cultivate a sense of proportion, digress for a moment from the Western Front to the 'side-shows' of the war—many of them in themselves ill-judged—in order to measure the distribution of our total war power. A calculation has been made by the

War Office and published in *The Military Effort*<sup>1</sup> on the basis, not of course of casualties, but of the men employed in any theatre multiplied by the number of days so employed. From this the following proportions are derived, taking the effort at the Dardanelles as the unit.

MAN-DAYS (Officers Excluded)					
Dardanelles	...	...	...	...	1.00
Salonica	...	...	...	...	6.40
North Russia	...	...	...	...	.08
Palestine	...	...	...	...	12.20
Mesopotamia	...	...	...	...	11.80
East Africa	...	...	...	...	8.20
France	...	...	...	...	73.00

And is there not also a virtue in 'saving up'? We never gave ourselves the chance. We had to improvise our armies in face of the enemy. The flower of the nation, its manhood, its enterprise, its brains were all freely given. But there never was found the time to train and organize these elements before they were consumed. From the priceless metal successive half-sharpened, half-tempered weapons were made, were used and broken as soon as they were fashioned, and then replaced by others similarly unperfected. The front had to be defended, the war had to be waged, but there was surely no policy in eagerly seeking offensives with immature formations or during periods when no answer to the machine gun existed. Suppose that the British Army sacrificed upon the Somme, the finest we ever had, had been preserved, trained and developed to its full strength till the summer of 1917, till perhaps 3,000 tanks were ready, till an overwhelming artillery was prepared, till a scientific method of continuous advance had been devised, till the apparatus was complete, might not a decisive result have been achieved at one supreme stroke?

It will be said—What of the Allies—what of Russia—what of Italy, would they have endured so long, while France and Britain perfected their plans and accumulated their power? But if direct aid had come to Russia through the destruction of Turkey, and to Italy through the marshalling of the Balkans against Austria, might not both these states have been spared the disasters to which they were in fact exposed? And is there any use in fighting a prolonged offensive in which the attacker suffers without strategic gain nearly double the loss of the defenders? How does the doing of an unwise, costly and weakening act help an Ally? Is not any temporary relief to him of pressure at the moment paid for by him with compound interest in the long run? What is the sense of attacking only to be defeated: or of 'wearing down the enemy'

<sup>1</sup> p. 742 *et seq.*

by being worn down more than twice as fast oneself? The uncontrollable momentum of war, the inadequacy of unity and leadership among Allies, the tides of national passion, nearly always *force* improvident action upon Governments or Commanders. Allowance must be made for the limits of their knowledge and power. The British commanders were throughout deeply influenced by the French mood and situation. But do not let us obscure the truth. Do not found conclusions upon error. Do not proclaim its melancholy consequences as the perfect model of the art of war or as the triumphant consummation of a great design.

## CHAPTER III

### FALKENHAYN'S CHOICE

Falkenhayn's Position—Attack the Strong or the Weak—Falkenhayn's Achievement in 1915—The Rejected Remedy of the Allies—The Initiative Returns to Germany—The Politics of Roumania—Roumania at the Outbreak of War—Roumanian Policy in 1915—Her Isolation at Christmas—The Salonica Expedition—Influence of Lloyd George and Briand—Still not too late—Power of the Unexpected—Falkenhayn's Memorandum—East or West—His Decision—Examination of his Policy—Need to win Roumania—Breaking the Blockade by Land—Roumania or Verdun.

THE opening scene of the year 1916 lies in the Cabinet of the German Main Headquarters, and the principal figure is General von Falkenhayn, the virtual Commander-in-Chief of the Central Empires. On the evening of September 14, 1914, Falkenhayn, then Minister of War, had been appointed by the Emperor Chief of the German General Staff. From this post General von Moltke, who, when the decision of the Marne had become unmistakable, had said to the Emperor: 'Your Majesty, we have lost the war,' had retired, broken in health and heart. The new Director of the German Army also retained for a time his position as Minister of War; and when early in the New Year he ceded this latter post, it was to a nominee of his own. Falkenhayn was therefore armed with the fullest powers, and during a period of almost exactly two years he continued to wield them undisputed. He had succeeded to a stricken inheritance. The great stake had been played and lost by his predecessor. The rush on Paris, trampling down Belgium, and with it all hope of ending the war by one blow, had failed. It had cost Germany her good name before the world, it had brought into the field against her the sea power, the wealth and the evergrowing military strength of the British Empire. In the East the defeat of the Austrians in the Battle of Lemberg had balanced the victories of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and the rulers of Germany, their armies at a standstill, their territories blockaded, their sea-borne commerce arrested, must prepare for a prolonged struggle against a combination of States of at least twice their population and wealth, commanding through sea power the resources of the whole

world and possessed at this juncture of the choice where to strike the next blow.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Truths of War are absolute, but the principles governing their application have to be deduced on each occasion from the circumstances, which are always different ; and in consequence no rules are any guide to action. Study of the past is invaluable as a means of training and storing the mind, but it is no help without selective discernment of the particular facts and of their emphasis, relation and proportion.

German, like British military policy, oscillated throughout the Great War between two opposed conceptions of strategy. Reduced to the simplest terms the contrasted theories may be expressed as follows: To attack the strong, or to attack the weak. Once all attempts against the Dardanelles were finally excluded from consideration, little was left to Britain but to attack the strong. The Balkans were lost, and the scale of the armies required to produce decisive results in the Balkan Peninsula or in Turkey had by this time outrun the limits of available sea power. The prizes had disappeared or dwindled ; the efforts required to gain them had been multiplied beyond all reason. But to Germany, with her central position and excellent railway system, both alternative policies were constantly open, and her leaders, in their torment of perplexity, were drawn now in one direction and now in the other.

To contend that either of these theories was wholly and invariably right and the other wrong would be to press argument beyond the bounds of common sense. Obviously if you can beat your strongest opponent in the hostile combination you should do so. But if you cannot beat your strongest opponent in the main theatre, nor he beat you ; or if it is very unlikely that you can do so, and if the cost of failure will be very great, then surely it is time to consider whether the downfall of your strongest foe cannot be accomplished through the ruin of his weakest ally, or one of his weaker allies ; and in this connection a host of political, economic and geographical advantages may arise and play their part in the argument. Every case must be judged upon its merits and in relation to the whole of the circumstances of the occasion. The issue is not one for rigid or absolute decision in general terms ; but a strong inclination in theory, based upon profound reflection, is a good guide amid the conflict and confusion of facts.

These volumes will leave the reader in no doubt about the opinion of their author. From first to last it is contended that once the main armies were in deadlock in France the true strategy

for both sides was to attack the weaker partners in the opposite combination with the utmost speed and ample force. According to this view, Germany was unwise to attack France in August, 1914, and especially unwise to invade Belgium for that purpose. She should instead have struck down Russia and left France to break her teeth against the German fortress and trench lines. Acting thus she would probably have avoided war with the British Empire, at any rate during the opening, and for her most important, phase of the struggle. The first German decision to attack the strongest led to her defeat at the Marne and the Yser, and left her baffled and arrested with the ever-growing might of an implacable British Empire on her hands. Thus 1914 ended.

But in 1915 Germany turned to the second alternative, and her decision was attended by great success. Leaving the British and French to shatter their armies against her trench lines in France, Germany marched and led her allies against Russia, with the result that by the autumn enormous territories had been conquered from Russia; all the Russian system of fortresses and strategic railways was in German hands, while the Russian armies were to a large extent destroyed and the Russian State grievously injured.

The only method by which the Allies could rescue Russia was by forcing the Dardanelles. This was the only counter-stroke that could be effective. If it had succeeded it would have established direct and permanent contact between Russia and her Western allies, it would have driven Turkey, or at the least Turkey in Europe, out of the war, and might well have united the whole of the Balkan States, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania, against Austria and Germany. Russia would thus have received direct succour, and in addition would have experienced an enormous relief through the pressure which the combined Balkan States would instantly have applied to Austria-Hungary. However, the narrow and local views of British Admirals and Generals and of the French Headquarters had obstructed this indispensable manoeuvre. Instead of a clear strategic conception being clothed and armed with all that the science of staffs and the authority of Commanders could suggest, it had been resisted, hampered, starved and left to languish. The time gained by this mismanagement and the situation created by the Russian defeats enabled Germany in September to carry the policy of attacking the weaker a step further. Falkenhayn organized an attack upon Serbia. Bulgaria was gained to the German side, Serbia was conquered, and direct contact was established between the Central Empires and Turkey. The failure and final abandonment of the Dardanelles campaign thus sealed the fate not only of the Balkan States but also of Russia. The defeat of the French and British



armies in the disastrous battles of Champagne and Loos proved the German front unbreakable in the West. The direct contact between Germany and Turkey established through the accession of Bulgaria gripped Turkey and threw open the road to the East. The year 1915 was therefore one of great success for Germany, and Falkenhayn could claim with justice that by the mistakes of her enemies and by her own adoption of the policy of attacking the weaker she had retrieved in its course the disastrous situation in which she had been left at the end of 1914. Opportunity and initiative had returned to Germany: the next move lay with her, and 1916 dawned in breathless expectation of what it would be.

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Nowhere was the choice of Germany awaited with more strained attention than in Roumania. The policy of a small State overshadowed by tremendous neighbouring Empires, at grips with one another, from both of whom she coveted important provinces, was necessarily one of calculation. In the years before the war Roumania conceived herself to have been defrauded of Bessarabia by Russia after the Russo-Turkish War of 1878. From Hungary her desires were at once natural and ambitious. Siebenburgen, Transylvania and to a lesser extent the Bukovina were largely inhabited by men of Roumanian race, and in Transylvania particularly Roumanian sentiment was sternly repressed by the Hungarian Government. To be united to these unredeemed provinces, to join her out-lying kinsfolk to the Motherland, to build in one form or another the integral, ethnological unit of a Great Roumania, was throughout the supreme and dominating motive of Bucharest. These aims had for generations been obvious both to Russia and to Austria-Hungary, who watched without illusion and fully armed every move in Roumanian affairs. On her other borders Roumania clashed with two Balkan States. She competed with Serbian ambitions for the eventual reversion of the Banat of Temesvar. She had profited by the crisis of the Balkan War of 1912 to take the Dobruja from Bulgaria. To her grave preoccupations about Russia and Austria-Hungary, Roumania must henceforward add a persisting fear of Bulgarian revenge.

These grim external relationships were aggravated by the complications of domestic and dynastic politics. The Roumanian Conservatives, headed by Majoresco, favoured Germany. The Liberals, headed by Bratiano, the new Prime Minister, favoured France. Outside official circles the most prominent politician on the side of the Entente was Take Jonescu, and on the side of Germany Carp. The King was not only pro-German but German, and a faithful son of the House of Hohenzollern to boot.

The Heir Apparent was pro-French and his wife pro-English. Both the King and his successor had exceptional consorts. The poetry of 'Carmen Sylva' is widely acclaimed: the courage of Queen Marie was to remain undaunted through every trial the tempest had in store. In short, Roumania, if war came, could move in either direction towards alternative prizes glittering across chasms, and in either case she would find a Party and a Royal Family apt and happy to execute her policy. To choose would be an awful hazard. Yet not to choose, to linger in futile neutrality, might cast away the supreme opportunity of Roumanian national history.

A minor complication upon the threshold of action was a Treaty signed in 1883 between Roumania and Austria-Hungary, to which Germany and Italy had subsequently acceded. By this the two parties engaged to follow a friendly policy, to give mutual support and not enter into any alliance or engagement directed against the other party. If Roumania without provocation on her part were attacked, Austria-Hungary was bound to bring her in ample time help and assistance. If Austria-Hungary were attacked in the same circumstances in a portion of her State bordering on Roumania, Roumania was reciprocally bound to come to her aid.

This Treaty had been kept strictly secret, and up to the outbreak of war was known in Roumania only to the King and to the Prime Minister. But Russia had deep suspicions that something of the sort existed, and in her railway strategy at least counted Roumania as a potential foe. In 1913 the Treaty, though it still stood, had become extremely precarious, and Count Czernin, the future Austro-Hungarian Foreign Secretary and at that time Austrian Minister to Bucharest, was charged specially with the duty of ascertaining from King Carol what reliance could be placed upon the compact. He achieved his object by suggesting to the King that the Alliance should be ratified by the Parliaments at Vienna, Budapest and Bucharest. This test was conclusive. 'The alarm evinced by the King,' writes Czernin, 'at the suggestion—at the very idea that the carefully guarded secret of the existence of an alliance should be divulged, proved to me how totally impossible it would be in the circumstances to infuse fresh life into such dead matter.'

Swiftly upon this came the bombs of Serajevo. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand was friendly to Roumania and adverse to the Magyar domination of Hungary. He was believed to favour a scheme of forming a Great Roumania at the expense of Hungary, and incorporating the whole unit in a tripartite Empire under a Triple instead of a Dual Monarchy. His murder therefore aroused in Roumania not only personal sympathy but national

disappointment. At the same time his disappearance removed one of the ties which connected Roumania with the Teutonic Powers. It was left for the Austrian Ultimatum to Serbia to sever the others.

Almost at the same hour when Sir Edward Grey was reading the brutal terms of this document to the British Cabinet in Downing Street, Count Czernin was repeating them to King Carol in Bucharest. 'Never shall I forget,' writes Czernin, 'the impression it made on the old King when he heard it. He, wise old politician that he was, recognized at once the immeasurable possibilities of such a step, and before I finished reading the document he interrupted me, exclaiming "It will be a world war." It was long before he could collect himself. . . .'

Czernin continues: 'The Ultimatum and the danger of war . . . completely altered the Roumanian attitude, and it was suddenly recognized that Roumania could achieve her object by other means, not by peace but by war—not with, but against the [Austro-Hungarian] Monarchy. I would never have believed it possible that such a rapid and total change could have occurred practically within a few hours. Genuine and unsimulated indignation at the tone of the Ultimatum was the order of the day, and the universal conclusion arrived at was "Austria has gone mad. . . ." Like a rock standing in the angry sea of hatred, poor old King Carol was alone with his German sympathies.'

Upon the complicated politics of aspiring Roumania the Great War had thus supervened. Russia and Austria-Hungary sprang at each other in mortal conflict, while high above the European scene rose the flaming sword of Germany. Each side bid for Roumania's favours and offered bribes for Roumanian intervention. But the inducements of the Great Powers took the form, not of ceding portions of their own territory to Roumanian sovereignty, but rather of promising to cede portions of their rivals' territory to Roumania if with her assistance they won the war. The question which Roumania had to decide was, Who would win the War? It was very difficult to tell, yet on judging rightly depended Ruin or Empire. Long did Roumania hesitate before she gave her answer.

There was no doubt where at the outset her sympathies lay. Roumania saw like all neutral states, like all detached observers, how flagrantly the Central Powers had put themselves in the wrong and how grossly they had blundered. On the balance far more was to be gained by Roumania from the downfall of Austria-Hungary than from that of Russia. The Pro-French Bratiano ministry was in power. Take Ionescu, like Venizelos in Greece, never swerved from the conviction that England would always

<sup>1</sup> *In the World War: Count Ottokar Czernin.*

come out victorious. Sympathies, merits, interest, mood, all pointed towards Britain, France and Russia. On the other side was King Carol with the Treaty on his conscience—and the fear of national destruction at his heart.

Prudence enjoined delay, and in this atmosphere any proposal of honouring the alliance and joining Austria was out of the question. The Roumanian Government followed the Italian example of declaring that as there had not been an unprovoked attack upon Austria the *casus fœderis* had not arisen. Roumania declared neutrality, and King Carol had to be content with this. The policy of Roumania henceforward is sourly described by Czernin in the following terms, which cannot be considered just unless her difficulties are also comprehended: 'The Roumanian Government consciously and deliberately placed itself between the two groups of Powers and allowed itself to be driven and pushed by each, got the largest amount of advantages from each, and watched for the moment when it could be seen which was the stronger, in order then to fall upon the weaker.'

While the old King lived his influence was sufficient, in spite of the Battle of Lemberg and the Russian advance into Galicia, to prevent Roumania from declaring war upon Austria-Hungary. But on October 10, 1914, King Carol died. By this time it was evident that the war would be long, and its result was more than ever to Roumanian eyes incalculable. In the spring of 1915 the Germans began to shatter the Russian front, and the immense disasters and recoil of the Russian armies dominated the Roumanian mood and paralysed the disconnected British, French and Russian diplomacy. On the other hand, the attack upon the Dardanelles, the prospect of the fall of Constantinople and of the arrival of a British Fleet in the Black Sea was a counterpoise. All through 1915, while the Russian retreat was continual, the expectation of a British and French victory over Turkey kept Roumania true to her convictions and neutral in the war. She accepted money from both sides, she sold corn and oil to Germany, but she obstructed the passage of German munitions to the Dardanelles and closed no gate decisively upon the Allies. With the failure of the Dardanelles Expedition, with the accession of Bulgaria to the Teutonic cause, with the invasion and ruin of Serbia and the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, all the military factors became adverse, and Roumania at the beginning of 1916 stood isolated and encompassed by the Central Empires.

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There was however one factor of which Roumania took notice. An allied army based on Salonica faced the Bulgarians along their Southern frontier. We have seen in the second Part the

curious beginnings of this enterprise, and, so far as they are worth recording, the still more curious causes which led to its being entrusted to the command of General Sarrail.

Sarrail had arrived at Salonica in September, 1915, to find one British and two French divisions in or near the town. The Serbians were retreating in all the cruel severity of the winter before the German-Austro-Bulgarian invasion. Some small French detachments were sent northward up the Vardar valley; but of course it was already too late for Sarrail or the Allied Powers to give any effective help. Sarrail had neither the force nor the communications to enable him to act effectively. As the British General Staff had explained carefully to their Government in October, no sufficient force could be spared, or if spared, landed in Salonica in time, or if landed at Salonica, transported and maintained in Serbia. The roads and railways, the wagons and rolling stock which existed could not carry to the north any army large enough seriously to intervene in the tragedy of the Serbian overthrow. At the same time the attitude of King Constantine had become so openly pro-German that there was an obvious danger of Salonica being converted into a hostile town *behind* the French advanced detachments which were based upon it. In these circumstances, Sarrail had recalled his troops hastily to the town of Salonica, determined to keep a hold at any rate on his base: and the remnant of the Serbian Army managed in the end to make its escape to the shores of the Adriatic, whence French and Italian warships embarked the indomitable survivors and brought them round to Salonica by sea. Here then in November, 1915, had ended the first futile phase of the Salonica expedition.

But this as it had turned out was only to be the beginning of the story. Although Serbia was conquered, the remnants of her army rescued, Bulgaria committed to the side of the Central Powers, and although the effectual co-operation of Greece had become hopeless, the Salonica policy was to continue. At the beginning of 1915 both Lloyd George and Briand had had the same idea of sending a large army to Salonica to influence the Balkans. They had not then had the power to execute their plan while it had great prizes to offer; but when almost all the possible advantages had disappeared these two brilliant men, akin in many ways in temperament, found themselves advancing to controlling positions. They both adhered faithfully to their first conception, and neither seemed to realize how vastly its prospects had been curtailed. Such was their influence upon events that a numerous allied army was, at enormous cost, in defiance of military opinion, and after most of the original political objectives had disappeared, carried or being carried to Salonica. At the outset the oppositions to developing the Salonica expedition on a far larger scale seemed

overwhelming; the majority of the British Government was against the plan; the General Staff were violently adverse; Lord Kitchener threatened several times to resign if it was pressed. Against this combination was Lloyd George. Similar conditions existed on the other side of the Channel; Joffre and the French Grand Quartier Général were adverse to the proposed diversion of forces from the main theatre. Clémenceau was violently hostile, but Briand, adroit, persuasive, and now Prime Minister, had many resources. Joffre's position had been weakened by his defeat in Champagne, and an accommodation was effected between him and the French Cabinet, of which the salient features were that Joffre should have the Salonica army as well as the armies in France under his general command, and that in return Joffre should whole-heartedly support the Salonica project in the councils of the Allies and also with the resources at his disposal. France thus united then threw her whole weight upon the British Cabinet and finally, aided by Lloyd George, induced their compliance.

The controversies which raged on both sides of the Channel upon the Salonica expedition were silenced by the remarkable fact that it was upon this much abused front that the final collapse of the Central Empires first began. The falling away of Bulgaria, the weakest Ally, produced reactions in Germany as demoralizing as the heaviest blows they had sustained upon the western front. The Salonica policy, for all its burden upon our shipping and resources, its diversion of troops, its false beacon to Roumania, and its futile operations, was nevertheless largely vindicated by the extremely practical test of results. The consternation of Bulgaria at the defeats of the German armies in France was however at least as potent a factor in her collapse as the actual military pressures to which her own troops were subjected. The reactions were reciprocal: the German defeats undermined Bulgarian resistance; and the Bulgarian surrender pulled out the linchpin of the German combination.

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True strategy in 1915 pointed for the Allies to the south-eastern theatre, to the Balkan States, to Constantinople, to the weaker members of the hostile confederacy; and though everything was done at the wrong time, in the wrong way, and at the wrong place, nevertheless the general direction of the pressure was right, and in the long run produced results. There was however one way in which the true strategic direction could have been armed with tactical force.

It must have been a hard thing for William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings to call his proud Normans off from the

attack, and by feigning a flight down the Hill of Senlac to induce Harold and his army to quit the stockades they had so stubbornly defended. William was not however found unequal to that test, and has in consequence been called the 'Conqueror' ever since.

Following this suggestion, the reader will no doubt perceive that the plan of British and Allied war which according to this account would best have served our interests in the year 1916 would have been a surprise attack upon the Dardanelles. Such an operation, if successful, would have been the only parry to a possible German eastward thrust, and the only means of holding Russia and preventing Roumania from being absorbed in the Teutonic combination. In face of the actual German plans for a great offensive at Verdun, for the withdrawal of all German troops from the Austrian Front, and an Austrian offensive in the Trentino, the forcing of the Dardanelles by Allied fleets and armies might well have been decisive. If this could have been accomplished by the month of June, Roumania might have been persuaded to march against the Central Powers simultaneously with the Russian offensive under Brusiloff; and in this event there can be no doubt that the whole Austrian Front towards the east would have been completely swept away. Moreover, the concentration of such large numbers of allied troops already in existence in the eastern Mediterranean, at Salonica, in Egypt and the Islands, and the immense quantities of shipping and small craft of all kinds which were already on the spot, would have rendered a general descent upon the Gallipoli Peninsula, on the Asiatic shore or at Dedeagatch-Bulair, a thoroughly feasible scheme.

A single mental conception would have transformed all the twenty allied divisions, sprawled in defensive or diversive functions, into a vast army crouching, under the cover of perfectly satisfactory explanations, for one swift convergent spring. Assuredly the enemy—Turks and Allies—were absolutely convinced that, dreading the fire that had burned us, we would never molest the Dardanelles again. Within two months of our evacuation they had withdrawn all their troops from the Gallipoli Peninsula except three divisions, and had distributed them in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Thrace. The Turkish Army that had so stoutly defended the Peninsula was scattered to every point of the compass, and separated from that fateful spot by long, uncertain, and inefficient railway and road communications. The British Army that might attack the deserted Peninsula lay within thirty-six hours' steaming of whatever landing places might be selected. The Navy was thoroughly equipped for the task. Not only did we know—to our cost maybe, but also to our experience—every inch of the ground and

every yard of the coast, but a situation as favourable as was open in March or April, 1915, had returned. The enemy was once again off his guard, and the choice of time and place had, in this theatre at least, returned to our hands. The very barriers of inhibition that existed in the minds of the British Cabinet, and of which the enemy was clearly conscious, were the prime reason for the attempt. The more morally impossible a military operation, the better chance it will have of success if it is physically practicable. Surprise—that sovereign talisman of War—springs from the doing of the exact thing the enemy is certain will never be tried. 'Whatever happens, they will never do that again. Put yourself in their place—would you?' 'No, it is inconceivable.' Do it then—if this is the enemy's thought—and do it for that very reason. However, no such audacious scheme crossed the minds of our rulers. They trusted they might never hear the name of Gallipoli again, and yielded themselves with placid hopefulness to the immense frontal attacks which were being prepared in France. It was not until the summer of 1918 that Admiral Keyes—strong in the achievement of Zeebrugge—and Admiral Wemyss installed as First Sea Lord, were able to obtain the authority for a renewed naval forcing of the Dardanelles in the possible campaign of 1919. That was at last too late.

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Long and anxious were the reflections of the German High Command. They have been elaborately explained by the person chiefly responsible. During Christmas, 1915, Falkenhayn set himself to write a Memorandum for the eye of the Emperor. He has published it in his Memoirs. The document is not an impressive one and it bears evidence of being dressed to the taste of Falkenhayn's august master, but its argument and its conclusion were certainly clear. Falkenhayn deprecated but did not seek to veto the Austrian proposal for an attack on Italy. He disapproved of attacks on England in the East: 'Victories at Salonica, the Suez Canal or in Mesopotamia can only help us in so far as they intensify the doubts about England's invulnerability which have already been aroused amongst the Mediterranean peoples and in the Mohammedan world. . . . We can in no case expect to do anything of decisive effect in the course of the war, as the advocates of an Alexander march to India or Egypt or an overwhelming blow at Salonica are always hoping. . . .' He rejected plans for continuing the offensive against Russia: 'According to all reports the domestic difficulties of the "Giant Empire" are multiplying rapidly. Even if we cannot perhaps expect a revolution in the grand style, we are entitled to believe that Russia's internal troubles will compel her to give in within a relatively short period.



. . . Unless we are again prepared to put a strain on the troops which is altogether out of proportion—and this is prohibited by the state of our reserves—an offensive with a view to a decision in the East is out of the question for us until April, owing to the weather and the state of the ground. *The rich territory of the Ukraine is the only objective that can be considered.*<sup>1</sup> The communications towards that region are in no way sufficient. It is to be presumed that we should either secure the adhesion of Roumania or make up our minds to fight her: both are impracticable for the moment. A thrust at Petersburg, with its million inhabitants, whom we should have to feed from our own short stocks if the operations were successful, does not promise a decision. An advance on Moscow takes us nowhere. We have not the forces available for any of these undertakings. For all these reasons Russia as an object of our offensive must be considered as excluded.' . . . Falkenhayn then proceeds to examine the Western theatre. 'In Flanders, as far as the Lorette Ridge, the state of the ground prevents any far-reaching operation until the middle of the spring. South of that point the local Commanders consider that about thirty divisions would be required. The offensive in the northern sector would need the same number. Yet it is impossible for us to concentrate those forces on one point of our front. . . . Moreover, the lessons to be deduced from the failure of our enemies' mass attacks are decisive against any imitation of their battle methods. An attempt at a mass breakthrough, even with an extreme accumulation of men and material, cannot be regarded as holding out prospects of success against a well-armed enemy whose morale is sound and who is not seriously inferior in number. The defender has usually succeeded in closing the gap. This is easy enough for him if he decides to withdraw voluntarily, and it is hardly possible to stop him doing so. The salients thus made, enormously exposed to the effect of flank fire, threaten to become a mere slaughter-house. The technical difficulties of directing and supplying the masses bottled up in them are so great as to seem practically insurmountable.

'We must equally discountenance any attempt to attack a British sector with comparatively inadequate means. We could only approve that course if we could give such an attack an objective within reasonable reach. There is no such objective; our goal would have to be nothing less than to drive the English completely from the Continent and force the French behind the Somme. If that object at least were not attained the attack would have been purposeless. . . .'

Having disposed of all these alternatives the General approaches

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

the conclusion to which his reflections had led him: 'There remains only France. . . . The strain in France has almost reached breaking-point. . . . The uncertain method of mass break-through, in any case beyond our means, is unnecessary. Within our reach, behind the French sector of the Western Front, there are objectives for the retention of which the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have. If they do so, the forces of France will bleed to death—as there can be no question of a voluntary withdrawal—whether we reach our goal or not. If they do not do so, and we reach our objective, the moral effect on France will be enormous. For an operation limited to a narrow front, Germany will not be compelled to spend herself so completely, for all other fronts are practically drained. She can face with confidence the relief attacks to be expected on those fronts, and indeed hope to have sufficient troops in hand to reply to them with counter-attacks, for she is perfectly free to accelerate or draw out her offensive, to intensify or break it off from time to time as suits her purpose.

'The objectives of which I am speaking now are Belfort and Verdun. The considerations urged above apply to both; yet the preference must be given to Verdun. The French lines at that point are barely 12 miles distant from the German railway communication. Verdun is therefore the most powerful *point d'appui* for an attempt [by the French] with a relatively small expenditure of effort to make the whole German front in France and Belgium untenable. At Christmas,' says Falkenhayn, 'it was decided to give effect to the views which had crystallized out of this process of reasoning.'

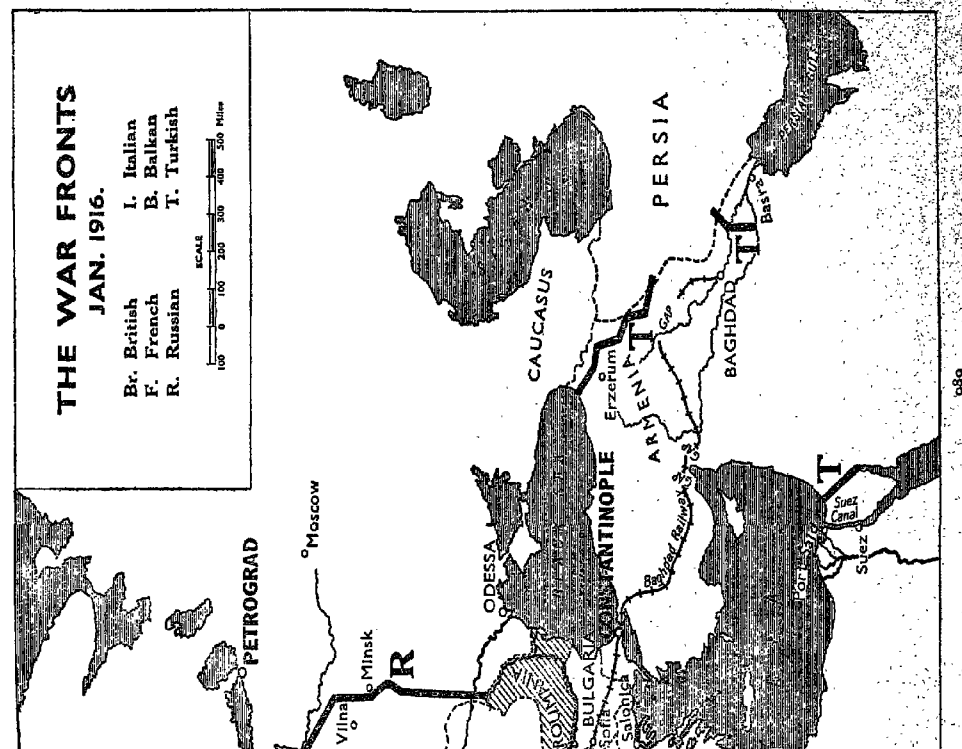
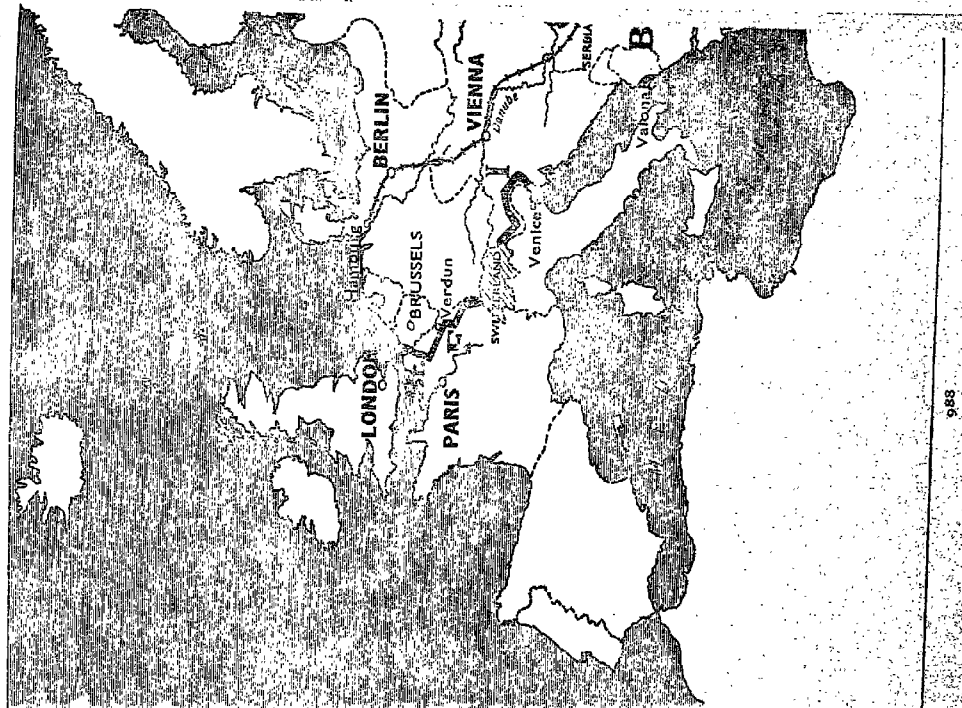
The execution of Falkenhayn's new policy required an almost complete relaxation of the pressure upon Russia. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were informed that no great enterprises against Russia could be set on foot in 1916, and that they could expect no reinforcements. All the German troops were withdrawn in the south from the Galician Front, and this theatre, so pregnant at once with menace and advantage, was confided entirely to Austrian hands. At the same time the Austrians were not dissuaded from preparing and developing an offensive against Italy in the Trentino, for which purpose they also withdrew a number of their best troops from their Eastern Front. And thus both north and south the Central Powers turned away from the eastern frontiers and their momentous problems, and leaving Russia to recover behind them and Roumania to brood over the scene with anxious eyes, plunged into desperate adventures in the West.

This was indeed a momentous decision. It involved the complete reversal of the policy by which General von Falkenhayn had

in 1915 restored the German situation. Instead of pursuing his advantages against the weaker antagonists, he selected for the great German effort of 1916 the strongest enemy at that enemy's strongest point. That the decision was disastrous has been proved by the event. But it may be contended also that it was wrong. It was based first of all upon an erroneous appreciation of the offensive and defensive conditions on the great battle-fronts in France, and upon the mistaken belief that the general war could be brought to an end in 1916 by some strong effort there by one side or the other. Secondly, it took altogether too narrow and too purely military a view of the general position of Germany and her allies.

The vital need for Germany was to break the blockade. Unless she could secure to herself resources far greater than could be found within the frontiers of the quadruple Alliance, the long war, to which the world was now condemned, must end inevitably in her exhaustion and defeat. She had no chance of breaking the blockade at sea. Its efficiency might be impaired by the devices of neutrals, but the vast process of starvation not only in food but in materials indispensable to modern armies was remorselessly and unceasingly at work. The British Fleet towered up in massive strength, and no one seriously doubted what the result<sup>6</sup> of a fought-out battle on blue water would be. Sea Power and Land Power were arrayed against each other, and if Germany could not conquer Britain on the seas, where could she turn? Only in one direction lay salvation. If she could not break the blockade by sea, she must break it by land. If the oceans were closed, Asia was open. If the West was barred with triple steel, the East lay bare. Only in the East and South-east and in Asia could Germany find the feeding grounds and breathing room—nay, the man power—without which her military strength however impressive was but a wasting security. Only in spreading their frontiers over new enormous regions could the Central Empires make themselves a self-contained and self-sufficing organism, and only by becoming such an organism could they deprive their enemies of the supreme and deadly weapon—Time.

The true and indeed the only attainable political objectives open to Germany in 1916 were the final overthrow of Russia and the winning of Roumania to the side of the Central Empires. These were harmonious aims. Success in the first would go far to achieve the second. Roumania was essential to Germany. 'As I now saw quite clearly,' writes Ludendorff of the situation in October, 1916, 'we should not have been able to exist, much less carry on the war, without Roumania's corn and oil. . . .' But if the battered corpse of an invaded and conquered Roumania was thus indispensable at the end of the year, how much more



# **THE WAR FRONTS** **JAN. 1916.**

Br. British  
F. French  
R. Russian  
I. Italian  
B. Balkan  
T. Turkish



precious would have been Roumania with her resources and her armies as an Ally at the beginning. During 1915 a German convention with Roumania had secured to the Teutonic Powers the vital corn and oil supplies. But Germany in January, 1916, might reasonably look for a far more favourable development. Bulgaria had joined the Central Powers. The Dardanelles were safely shut. Russia was reeling. Roumania was therefore already almost surrounded, and any further collapse of Russia would isolate her completely. If she coveted Transylvania from Hungary, did she not also claim Bessarabia from Russia? A sagacious German policy at this juncture could have offered to Roumania in combination every inducement to join her neighbours, from high rewards to extreme duress.

Following upon this it would appear that the true strategic objectives of Germany in 1916 were the Black Sea and the Caspian. These lay within her grasp and required no effort beyond her strength. A continued advance against the south lands of Russia into the Ukraine and towards Odessa would have secured at comparatively little cost sufficient food for the Teutonic peoples. An upward thrust of Turkish armies sustained by German troops and organized by German generals would have conquered the Caucasus. Fleets and flotillas improvised by German science could easily dominate both the inland seas. The command of these waters would threaten simultaneously every point along their 5,000 miles of coast line, absorbing in negative defence ten Russians for every German employed, and multiplying in an almost unlimited degree the opportunities for further advance. Roumania completely encircled, cut from French and British aid by Bulgaria and Turkey, cut from the Russian armies by an Austro-German march from Lemberg to Odessa, could have had no choice but to join the Central Empires. The skilful employment of fifteen or twenty German divisions animating Austrian and Turkish armies would surely and easily have extended the territories which nourished Germany so as to include by the end of the summer of 1916 the whole of South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Caspian. The Austro-German Front against Russia might have stretched from Riga to Astrakhan, with little more expenditure of force than was required to hold the existing Eastern line. At every moment and at every stage in these vast combinations the pressure upon Russia and upon her failing armies would have increased: and at every stage her troops and those of her allies would have been dissipated in vain attempts to wall in the ever-spreading flood in the East, or would have been mown down in frantic assaults upon the German trenches in France.

And this was itself only a stage in the process of land expansion

and strategic menace open to the German military power. From the Caspian once navally commanded, Persia was a cheap and easy prey. There was no need to march large armies like Alexander to the East. Literally a few thousand Germans could have dominated Northern Persia, and eastward still beyond Persia lay Afghanistan and the threat to India. The consequences of such a German policy must have paralysed all British war effort from her Indian Empire. In Egypt, in Mesopotamia, and in India whole armies of British and Indian troops would have been forced to stand idle in apprehension of impending invasion or revolt, while the glory of the German eagles and the sense of approaching change swept far and wide through the peoples of Asia.

But from all the prospects so opened out to her in the East Germany was lured away. The final destruction of Russia, the overawing and conversion of Roumania, the conquest of granary after granary and oilfield after oilfield, the indefinite menace to the British Empire in Asia, with consequent diversion and dissipation of British forces, were all renounced by Falkenhayn in a few meagre sentences. Germany was made to concentrate her whole available offensive effort upon the cluster of wooded hills and permanent defences which constituted the strong fortress of Verdun. One-half the effort, one-quarter the sacrifice, lavished vainly in the attack on Verdun would have overcome the difficulty of the defective communications in 'the rich lands of the Ukraine.' The Russian armies in the south would have been routed long before they had gained their surprising victories under Brusiloff; and Roumania, her 500,000 men and her precious supplies of corn and oil, would have been brought into the war early, not late, and as an ally and not as a foe. But the school of formula had vanquished the school of fact, the professional bent of mind had overridden the practical; submission to theory had replaced the quest for reality. Attack the strongest at his strongest point, not the weakest at his weakest point, was once again proclaimed the guiding maxim of German military policy.

From the moment when he received the news of the total evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the opportunity of General von Falkenhayn, Chief of the German General Staff, was to pronounce the word *ROUMANIA*. He pronounced instead the word *VERDUN*.

## CHAPTER IV

### VERDUN.

The Dismantled Forts—Fact and Sentiment—The Anvil—Falkenhayn's Tactical Conception—The Attitude and Responsibility of the Crown Prince—Colonel Driant, Deputy for Nancy—Galliéni and Joffre—Castelnau's Mission—The Battle begins—The composure of General Joffre—Activities of Castelnau and Pétain—The Struggle prolonged—Falkenhayn entangled—Cost of a Rigid Defence—Galliéni's last Act—'Unity of front'—Genesis of the Somme Plan—Reaction of Verdun on the Somme—The Revival of Russia—The Fatal Defect—Brusiloff's Offensive—Surprise—Consequences—The Price of Verdun.

THE drama of Verdun may perhaps be opened by the visit to the fortress in July, 1915, of a delegation from one of the Army Commissions of the Chamber. The deputies had been disquieted by the rumours they had heard of the insecurity of the region before which lay the army of the German Crown Prince. The delegation were received by General Dubail, commanding the group of armies of the East, and by the Governor of Verdun, General Coutanceau. General Dubail explained that after the experiences of Liège and Namur permanent forts were no longer useful. They could be destroyed with certainty by heavy howitzers and were mere shell traps for their garrisons. The only effective defence of Verdun lay in field troops holding an extended line around the fortress. Following these ideas, for which there was much to say, the forts had been dismantled and their coveted guns, garrisons and stores dispersed among the armies. The Governor, General Coutanceau, had the temerity to express a different opinion. He considered that the forts still had a high value and should play an important part in conjunction with the field defences. General Dubail was so irritated at this intervention of his subordinate and rebuked him in terms of such severity, that the Commission on their return to Paris thought it necessary to appeal to the Minister of War to shield the outspoken Governor from punishment and disgrace. In fact however, after an interval of a few weeks General Coutanceau was removed from the Governorship of Verdun, and his place was taken by General Herr. At the beginning of February, 1916, on the very eve of the attack the army of which the Verdun troops formed a part was trans-

ferred from the command of General Dubail to the centre group under General de Langle de Cary. Thus the responsibility for the neglect to develop to the full the defences of this area was divided and difficult to trace.

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In a military sense, Verdun had no exceptional importance either to the French or to the Germans. Its forts were disarmed ; it contained no substantial magazines ; it guarded no significant strategic point. It was two hundred and twenty kilometres from Paris, and its capture would not have made any material difference to the safety either of the capital or of the general line. Falkenhayn and Ludendorff both speak of it as a dangerous sally-port against their main railway communications, scarcely twelve miles away. But seeing that only two inferior lines of railway served Verdun, while the German occupied area in its front was fed by no less than fifteen, it should have been easy for the Germans to provide against such a sally. At its highest, the capture of Verdun would have been a military convenience to the Germans, and in a lesser degree an inconvenience to the French.

But then there was the sentiment which attached to Verdun. 'It was,' says a French historian,<sup>1</sup> 'the great fortress proudly confronting its rival Metz, whose name had for centuries not ceased to haunt Germanic imaginations ; it was the great advanced citadel of France ; the principal bastion of her Eastern Frontier, whose fall resounding throughout Europe and the whole world would efface for ever the victories of the Marne and Yser.'

This then was the foundation upon which Falkenhayn's conception of the German attack upon Verdun stood. It was not to be an attempt at a 'break through.' The assailants were not to be drawn into pockets from which they would be fired at from all sides. They were to fire at the French and assault them continually in positions which French pride would make it impossible to yield. The nineteen German divisions and the massed artillery assigned to the task were to wear out and 'bleed white' the French Army. Verdun was to become an anvil upon which French military manhood was to be hammered to death by German cannon. The French were to be fastened to fixed positions by sentiment, and battered to pieces there by artillery. Of course this ingenious plan would be frustrated if the French did not lend themselves to it, and if they did not consider themselves bound to make disproportionate sacrifices to retain the particular hills on which stood the empty forts of Verdun.

It is not intended to press this argument too far. Verdun was

<sup>1</sup> Corda : *La Guerre Mondiale*, p 187.



a trophy. The German challenge had to be met by the whole resources of the French Army; but ground should have been sacrificed in the conflict as readily as men, with the sole object of exacting the highest price from the enemy at every stage. A greater manœuvring latitude accorded to the defence would have rendered the whole episode far less costly to the French Army, and would have robbed the plan of General von Falkenhayn of such reasons as it could muster. But the German commander, wrong in so much else, had rightly gauged the psychology of the French nation.

Writing in August, 1916, I tried to penetrate and analyse the probable motives which animated the Germans in their attack on Verdun.<sup>1</sup>

' . . . Suppose your gap is blasted—what then? Are you going to march to Paris through it? What is to happen, if you break the line of an otherwise unbeaten army? Will you really put your head into the hole?'

'No,' say Main Headquarters; 'we are not so foolish. We are not seeking Verdun. Nor are we seeking to blast a hole. Still less do we intend to march through such a hole. Our aim is quite different. We seek to wear down an army, not to make a gap; to break the heart of a nation, not to break a hole in a line. We have selected Verdun because we think the French will consider themselves bound to defend it at all costs; because we can so dispose our cannon around this apex of their front as to pound and batter the vital positions with superior range and superior metal, and force our enemy to expose division after division upon this anvil to our blows.'

The strategic and psychological conceptions which had led Falkenhayn to select Verdun as the point of the German attack became mingled in the tactical sphere with his impressions derived from the success of the Gorlice-Tarnow attack on Russia in the previous year. There a punch followed by a scoop executed on a moderate front, but backed by a blasting concentration of artillery and gas, had led to a general withdrawal of the Russian line; and the process had been repeated again and again. His plan at Verdun was therefore by this intense punch on a narrow front with high-class troops and unprecedented cannon fire to hammer the French on the anvil of fixed positions, and if successful, to rip their front, as a purely subsidiary development, to the right and left. In pursuance of this idea, he allocated to the Crown Prince nearly 2,000 extra guns, including all the latest

<sup>1</sup> The *London Magazine*, published in November, 1916.

types, and masses of shells, but added only four army corps to the forces of the Fifth German Army holding the line. He prescribed the exact frontage and scope of the attack and confined it strictly within the limits possible to these modest forces.

The French trench line ran in a half-moon salient five or six thousands yards around the permanent forts of Verdun.<sup>1</sup> This position was cut in two unequal portions by the Meuse River, at this season nearly a kilometre wide. There were therefore the defences of the left bank (the West or the French left); the defences of the right bank (the East or French centre); and farther east (and to the French right) the plain of the Woeuvre and the fortified eastern heights of the Meuse. It was upon the French centre, between the Meuse and the Woeuvre plain, that the intense punch was to be directed. The German High Command believed that if this centre were pierced to a certain depth, the retreat of the two flanks would ensue automatically, or could easily be procured by further pressure. Their tactical studies of the ground before the war had led them to regard the positions of the left bank, unless and until compromised by the retreat of the French centre, as exceptionally strong and forbidding. All these conclusions and decisions were duly imparted to the Crown Prince and the Fifth Army Staff of which General von Knobelsdorf was the chief.

The Crown Prince has been harshly judged in the passion and propaganda of the war. He has been represented at once as a fop and as a tyrant, as a callow youth and as a Moloch; as an irresponsible passenger and as a commander guilty of gross and disastrous military errors. None of these contradictory alternatives fit the truth. The German Imperial Princes in command of armies or groups of armies were held in strong control. The Headquarters Staff, main and local, decided and regulated everything, and the function of the ill-starred Heir Apparent was largely to bear the odium for their miscalculations and to receive, during the early years of the war, their ceremonious civilities. Even these civilities became attenuated as the long-drawn conflict deepened. Nevertheless, the Crown Prince had influence. He had with the All Highest the access of a son to a father. He had the right to express a view, to pose a question, to require an answer from any General, however august. He also had a share in the Emperor's unique point of view. He was a proprietor. Life, limb and fortune were risked by all the combatants in the Great War, but the inheritance to the Imperial throne, turning so nakedly on the general result, exercised from the first days of the war a sobering and concentrating effect upon a hitherto careless mind. It may also be said that no group of

<sup>1</sup> See Map, p. 1000.

German armies was more consistently successful than his; and that there is evidence that his personal influence—whatever it may have been—was often thrown into the right side of the scales.

The Crown Prince did not feel comfortable about the attack at Verdun in 1916. He thought that it would be wiser to finish first with Russia in the East. He had of course a long-suppressed eagerness 'to lead his tried and trusty troops once more to battle against the enemy, etc.' But he was disquieted by Falkenhayn's repeated statements that the French Army was to be 'bled white' at Verdun, and he felt no conviction that this would only happen to the French. It might even happen to the House of Hohenzollern. Moreover, on the tactical form of the attack his misgivings were supported or perhaps inspired by General von Knobelsdorf and his Staff. Their view was that the attack, if made at all, should be made on a broader front, comprising simultaneously both sides of the Meuse, and that large reserves should be at hand from the outset to exploit the advantages in the initial surprise. The Crown Prince sent Knobelsdorf to lay these claims before Falkenhayn. Falkenhayn insisted on his plan. He had framed it in relation to the whole situation as he saw it and he adhered to the smallest detail. There was to be an anvil. There was to be a punch on a narrow front. There was to be an unparalleled artillery, and only just enough infantry to exploit success. They were to proceed step by step, their way forward being blasted at each stage by cannon. Thus, whether Verdun was taken or not, the French Army would be ruined and the French nation sickened of war. It was a simple solution for world-wide problems, but it was Falkenhayn's solution, and he was in supreme control. By his determination and superior authority Knobelsdorf was soon over-persuaded, and the Crown Prince was thereafter overruled by the military hierarchy in mechanical unanimity. Such are the facts. While the newspapers of the time and in these days many of the histories have dwelt on the vanity and ruthless pride which prompted the heir to the Imperial throne to drive the manhood of Germany ceaselessly into the fires of Verdun, the truth is different. The Crown Prince, shocked and stricken by the butchery and opposed to the operation, continuously endeavoured to use such influence as he commanded to bring it to a close; and we have Ludendorff's testimony to his expressions of relief and pleasure when that decision was finally taken.

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The first warning of the unprepared condition of the Verdun defences reached the French Government through an irregular channel. Colonel Driant, Deputy for Nancy, commanded a group

of Chasseur battalions in the advanced lines of Verdun. At the end of November this officer and Member of Parliament came on leave to Paris and requested to be heard by the Army Commission of the Chamber, and on December 1 he exposed to his fellow-deputies the lack of organization and general inadequacy of the defences of the fortress. The Commission confirmed the account given by Colonel Driant, and their report was presented by the Commission to the Minister of War. The vigilant Galliéni was already possessed of similar statements from other quarters, and on December 16 he wrote to General Joffre. From different sources, he said, came accounts of the organization of the front which showed defects in the state of the defences at certain points, particularly and notably in the region of the Meurthe, and of Toul and Verdun. The network of trenches was not complete as it was on the greater part of the front. Such a situation, if it were true, ran the risk of presenting grave embarrassment. A rupture by the enemy in such circumstances would involve not only General Joffre's own responsibility but that of the whole Government. Recent experience of the war proved superabundantly that the first lines could be forced, but that the resistance of second lines could arrest even a successful attack. He asked for an assurance that on all the points of the front the organization at least of two lines should be designed and developed with all the necessary fortifications—barbed wire, inundations, abatis, etc.

The Commander-in-Chief hastened to reply on December 18 in a letter which holds its place in the records of ruffled officialdom. He asserted in categorical detail that nothing justified the misgivings of the Government. He concluded upon that peculiar professional note of which French military potentates have by no means the monopoly.

'But since these apprehensions are founded upon reports which allege defects in the state of the defences, I request you to communicate these reports to me and to specify their authors. I cannot be party to soldiers placed under my command bringing before the Government, by channels other than the hierarchic channel, complaints or protests concerning the execution of my orders. Neither does it become me to defend myself against vague imputations, the source of which I do not know. The mere fact that the Government encourages communications of this kind, whether from mobilized Members of Parliament or directly or indirectly from officers serving on the front, is calculated to disturb profoundly the spirit of discipline in the Army. The soldiers who write know that the Government weighs their advice against that of their Chiefs.

The authority of these Chiefs is prejudiced. The morale of all suffers from this discredit.

'I could not lend myself to the continuation of this state of things. I require the whole-hearted confidence of the Government. If the Government trusts me, it can neither encourage nor tolerate practices which diminish that moral authority of my office, without which I cannot continue to bear the responsibility.'

Evidently Colonel and Deputy Driant in his trenches before Verdun was in danger from more quarters than one.

It is asserted that General Galliéni had no mind to put up with this sort of thing, and that he framed a rejoinder both commanding and abrupt. But colleagues intervened with soothing processes. The Minister for War was marshalling with much assent the heads of a broad indictment of the Grand Quartier Général. He was persuaded to reduce this particular incident to modest proportions. At any rate, in the end he signed a soft reply. Joffre and G.Q.G. had vindicated their authority. The Ministry for War and the presumptuous and meddling deputies had been put in their places. But there were still the facts to be reckoned with—and the Germans.

Evidence continued to accumulate, and gradually a certain misgiving began to mingle with the assurance of Chantilly. Their own officers sent to examine the Verdun defences threw, in discreet terms, doubts upon the confident assertions with which the Commander-in-Chief had replied to the Minister of War. The troops on the spot and their Commanders were convinced they were soon to be attacked. The defences were still unsatisfactory. The Parliamentary Commissions buzzed incessantly. Finally, on January 20, General de Castelnau, the Major-General of the armies, and General Joffre's virtual Second-in-Command and

<sup>2</sup> Mais puisque ces craintes sont fondées sur des comptes rendus vous signalant des déficiences dans la mise en état de défense, je vous demande de me communiquer ces comptes rendus et de me désigner leurs auteurs.

Je ne puis admettre, en effet, que des militaires placés sous mes ordres fassent parvenir au gouvernement par d'autres voies que la voie hiérarchique des plaintes ou des réclamations au sujet de l'exécution de mes ordres.

Il ne me convient pas davantage de me défendre contre des imputations vagues dont j'ignore la source.

Le seul fait que le gouvernement accueille des communications de ce genre provenant, soit de parlementaires mobilisés, soit directement ou indirectement d'officiers servant sur le front, est de nature à jeter un trouble profond dans l'esprit de discipline de l'armée. Les militaires qui écrivent savent que le gouvernement fait état de leurs correspondances vis-à-vis de leurs chefs. L'autorité de ceux-ci est atteinte ; le moral de tous souffre de ce discrédit.

'Je ne saurais me prêter à la continuation de cet état de choses. J'ai besoin de la confiance entière du gouvernement. S'il me l'accorde, il ne peut ni encourager ni tolérer des pratiques qui diminuent l'autorité morale de mon commandement et faute de laquelle je ne pourrai plus continuer à en assumer la responsabilité.'

potential successor, immediately on his return from Salonica, visited Verdun in person. He found much to complain of and gave various directions to remedy the neglects. A regiment of engineers was hurried to the scene; the necessary materials for fortification were provided; communications were improved and work begun. But time was now very short. The German masses were gathering fast. Their enormous magazines swelled each day. Their immense concentration of heavy artillery perfected itself.

Quite early in January the 2nd Bureau (Intelligence) began to indicate Verdun as the point at which a German attack would be delivered. A constant increase of batteries and troops in the regions north of Montfaucon and on both sides of the Meuse, the presence of 'storm' divisions near Hattonchâtel, and the arrival of Austrian heavy howitzers were definitely reported. General Dupont, head of the 2nd Bureau, declared with conviction that Verdun was to be the object of a heavy and immediate attack.

The French Operations Staff, to judge by Pierrefeu's excellent account,<sup>1</sup> seemed to have abandoned their scepticism slowly. Certainly there seemed many parts of the French line more attractive to a hostile attack. But by the middle of February, those who doubted that a great German offensive was soon to break upon Verdun were few. The majority of the staff were at last convinced that the hour was near and all—so we are told—were eager for the day and confident of its results. No one however had the least idea what the mechanical force of the onslaught would be.

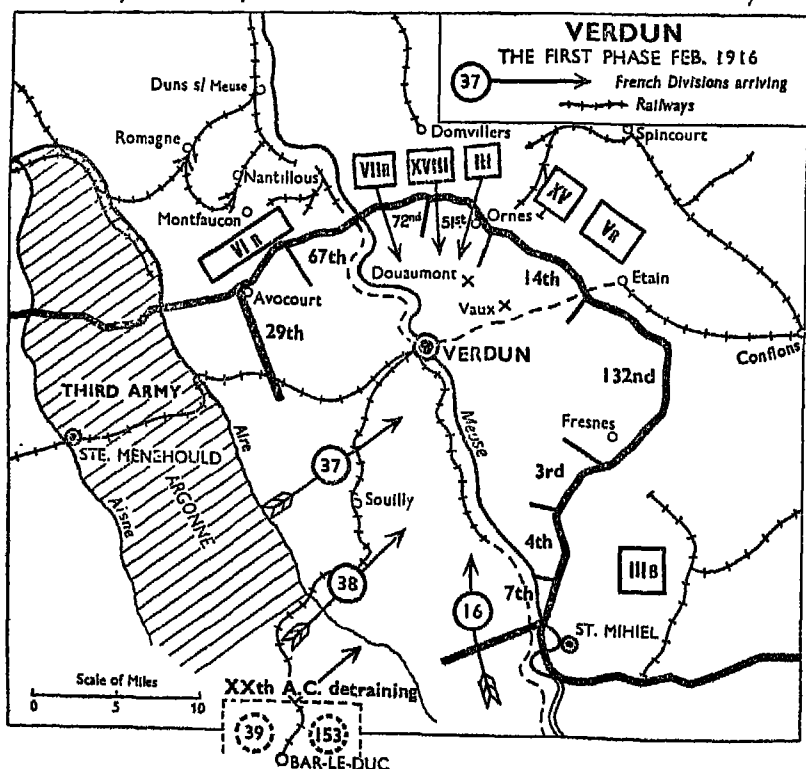
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At four o'clock in the morning of February 21 the explosion of a fourteen-inch shell in the Archbishop's Palace at Verdun gave signal of battle, and after a brief but most powerful bombardment three German Army Corps advanced upon the apex of the French front, their right hand on the Meuse. The troops in the forward positions attacked were, except towards the eastern flank, driven backwards towards the fortress line. The battle was continued on the 22nd and the 23rd. The brave Colonel Driant was killed in the woodlands covering the retreat of his Chasseurs. The line was reformed on the ridges near Douaumont: but the German six-inch artillery, dragged forward by tractors, hurled upon the new position so terrific a firestorm that the French Division chiefly concerned collapsed entirely. During the afternoon of the 24th, both the General commanding the Verdun area and the Commander of the Group of Armies in which it lay (Langle de

<sup>1</sup> 'G.Q.G.' by Jean de Pierrefeu. This officer was employed throughout the war to draft the official communiqués of the French Headquarters. He had the best opportunities of knowing exactly what took place. He is a writer of extraordinary force and distinction.

Cary), telegraphed to Chantilly, advising an immediate withdrawal to the left bank of the Meuse, and the consequent abandonment of the town and fortress of Verdun.

General Joffre was by no means disconcerted by these unexpected and untoward events. He preserved throughout that admirable serenity for which he was noted, which no doubt would have equally distinguished him on the flaming crests of Douaumont. He assented on the 22nd to the movement of the 1st and XXth Corps, and to a request to Sir Douglas Haig to relieve in the line with British troops the Tenth French Army to reinforce Verdun. For the rest he remained in Olympian tranquillity, inspiring by his unaffected calm, regular meals and peaceful slumbers confidence in all about him. A less detached view was necessarily taken by Castelnau. The Second French Army had



been relieved in the line some time before by the increasing British forces. This army was in the best order, rested and trained. Its staff had not been affected by the new French rule obliging every Staff Officer to do a spell of duty with the fighting troops. Its Commander, Pétain, had gained already in the war one of the

highest reputations. On the evening of February 24, General de Castelnau presented himself to General Joffre and proposed to move the whole of the Second French Army to Verdun. The Commander-in-Chief assented to this. At eleven o'clock on the same night Castelnau, having received further reports of the most serious character, requested by telephone permission to proceed personally to Verdun with plenary powers. Pierrefeu has described the incident which followed. The Commander-in-Chief was already asleep. Following his almost invariable custom he had retired to rest at ten o'clock. The orderly officer on duty declared it impossible to disturb him. At first Castelnau submitted. But a few minutes later a further message from Verdun foreshadowing the immediate evacuation of the whole of the right bank of the Meuse arrived, and on this Castelnau would brook no further obstruction. He went in person to the villa Poiret in which the great soldier was reposing. Upon the express order of the Major-General an aide-de-camp took the responsibility of knocking at the formidable double-locked door. The supreme Chief, after perusing the telegrams, gave at once the authorization for General de Castelnau to proceed with full powers, declared there must be no retreat, and then returned to his rest.

Castelnau started forthwith a little after midnight. At Avize, Headquarters of Langle de Cary and the centre group of armies, he quelled the pessimism that existed, and from there telephoned to Verdun announcing his impending arrival and calling upon General Herr 'on the order of the Commander-in-Chief not to yield ground but to defend it step by step,' and warning him that if this order was not executed, 'the consequences would be most grave for him (Herr).' By daylight of the 25th Castelnau reached Verdun and found himself confronted with the tragic scenes of confusion and disorder which haunt the immediate rear of a defeated battle-front. All accounts agree that the influence and authority of Castelnau on the 25th reanimated the defence and for the moment restored the situation. Wherever he went, decision and order followed him. He reiterated the command at all costs to hold the heights of the Meuse and to stop the enemy on the right bank. The XXth and Ist Army Corps now arriving on the scene were thrown into the battle with this intention. While taking these emergency measures, Castelnau had already telegraphed to Pétain ordering him to take command, not only of the Second French Army, which was now moving, but also of all the troops in the fortified region of Verdun.

On the morning of the 26th Pétain received from Castelnau the direction of the battle, which he continued to conduct, while at the same time mastering the local situation. The neglect of the field and permanent defences of a fortress which it was decided to



defend to the death, now bequeathed a cruel legacy to the French troops. In advance of the permanent forts there were neither continuous lines of trenches nor the efficient organization of strong points. Telephone systems and communication trenches were scarce or non-existent. The forts themselves were all empty and dismantled. Even their machine guns and cupolas had been extracted and their flanking batteries disarmed. All these deficiencies had now to be repaired in full conflict and under tremendous fire. Besides the direction of the battle and the organization of his forces and rapidly growing artillery, Pétain took a number of general decisions. Four successive lines of defence were immediately set in hand. In full accord with the views of the much-chastised General Coutanceau, Pétain directed the immediate reoccupation and re-arming of all the forts. To each he assigned a garrison with fourteen days' food and water, and solemn orders never to capitulate. The immense value of the large subterranean galleries of these forts, in which a whole battalion could live in absolute security till the moment of counter-attack, was now to be proved. Lastly, the new commander instituted the marvellous system of motor-lorries between Verdun and Bar le Duc. No less than three thousand of these passed up and down this road every twenty-four hours, and conveyed each week during seven months of conflict an average of 90,000 men and 50,000 tons of material. Along this 'Sacred Way,' as it was rightly called, no less than sixty-six divisions of the French Army were to pass on their journey to the anvil and the furnace fires.

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By the end of February the first German onslaught had been stemmed. Large armies were on both sides grappling with each other round the fortress, ever-increasing streams of reinforcements and munitions flowed from all France and Germany towards the conflict, and ever-increasing trains of wounded ebbed swiftly from it. It had become a trial of strength and military honour between Germany and France. Blood was up and heads were down. Vain had it been for Falkenhayn to write at Christmas: Germany will be 'perfectly free to accelerate or draw out her offensive; to intensify or break it off from time to time as suits her purpose.' His own professional and official existence was now engaged. The wine had been drawn and the cup must be drained. The French and German armies continued accordingly to tear each other to pieces with the utmost fury, and the power of the German artillery inflicted grievous losses day by day on the now more numerous French.

When the Germans had attacked on February 21, they had, in accordance with Falkenhayn's plan, used only the three Army

Corps of their centre, and three others had stood idle on the two flanks. It can scarcely be doubted that had the whole assaulting forces been thrown in at once, the position of the French, already so critical, could not at the outset have been maintained. However, on March 6 the three flanking Army Corps joined in the battle, and a new series of sanguinary engagements was fought during the whole of March and April for the possession mainly of the hill called 'Le Mort Homme' on the left bank of the Meuse, and for the Côte du Poivre on the right. But the Germans achieved no success comparable to that of their opening. The conditions of the conflict had become more equal. Closely locked and battling in the huge crater-fields and under the same steel storm, German and French infantry fell together by scores of thousands. By the end of April nearly a quarter of a million French and Germans had been killed or wounded in the fatal area, though influencing in no decisive way the balance of the World War.

To the war of slaughter and battles was added that of propaganda and communiqués. In this the French had largely the advantage. They did not cease to proclaim day after day the enormous German losses which attended every assault. As the Germans were obviously storming entrenchments and forts, the world at large was prepared to believe that they must be making sacrifices far greater than those of the French. 'Up till March,' says Ludendorff, 'the impression was that Verdun was a German victory,' but thereafter opinion changed. Certainly during April and May Allies and neutrals were alike persuaded that Germany had experienced a profound disappointment in her attack on Verdun, and had squandered thereon the flower of her armies.

I myself shared the common impression that the German losses must be heavier than those of the French. All accounts however showed that the strain upon the French Army was enormous. They were compelled to defend all sorts of positions, good, bad and indifferent, and to fight every inch of the ground with constant counter-attacks under a merciless artillery; and it was clear that they were conducting the defence in the most profuse manner. 'The French,' I wrote at the time, 'suffered more than the defence need suffer by their valiant and obstinate retention of particular positions. Meeting an artillery attack is like catching a cricket ball. Shock is dissipated by drawing back the hands. A little "give," a little suppleness, and the violence of impact is vastly reduced. Yet, notwithstanding the obstinate ardour and glorious passion for mastery of the French, the German losses at Verdun greatly exceeded theirs.'<sup>1</sup>

It is with surprise which will perhaps be shared by others that

<sup>1</sup> *London Magazine*. Written in August, published November, 1916

I have learned the true facts. During the defensive phase from February to June the French Army suffered at Verdun the loss of no fewer than 179,000 men (apart from officers) killed, missing or prisoners, and 263,000 wounded: a frightful total of 442,000; or with officers, probably 460,000. The Germans on the other hand, although the attackers, used their man-power so much less and their artillery so much more that their loss, including officers, did not exceed 72,000 killed, missing and prisoners, and 206,000 wounded: a total of 278,000. From the totals of both sides there should be deducted the usual one-eighth for casualties on other parts of the front where French and Germans faced each other. But this in no way alters the broad fact that the French sacrificed in defending Verdun more than three men to every two attacking Germans. To this extent therefore the tactical and psychological conceptions underlying Falkenhayn's scheme were vindicated.

Ever since the opening phase of the struggle of Verdun the personal position of General Joffre had deteriorated. The neglect to prepare the field defences of Verdun, the disarming of its forts, the proved want of information of the Commander-in-Chief and his Headquarters Staff upon this grave matter, the fact that it had been left to the Parliamentary Commission to raise the alarm, the obstinacy with which this alarm had been received and resented, were facts known throughout Government and Opposition circles in Paris. The respective parts played by Joffre and Castelnau in the first intense crisis of the Verdun situation were also widely comprehended. In the whole of this episode little credit could be discovered either for the Commander-in-Chief or for the gigantic organization of the Grand Quartier Général sourly described as 'Chantilly.' Consideration of all these facts led General Galliéni to a series of conclusions and resolves. First, he wished to bring Joffre to Paris, from which centre he would exercise that general command over all the French armies, whether in France or the Orient, which had been entrusted to him. Secondly, he wished to place General de Castelnau at the head of the armies in France. Thirdly, he proposed to diminish in certain respects the undue powers which Chantilly had engrossed to itself, and to restore to the Ministry of War the administrative functions of which it had to a large extent been deprived. Galliéni laid proposals in this sense, though without actually naming Castelnau, before the Council of Ministers on March 7, 1916. France now had the opportunity of securing for her armies and for her Allies military leadership in the field of the first order, without at the same time losing any advantage which could be derived from the world prestige of Joffre.

The Cabinet was greatly alarmed. They feared a political and

ministerial crisis, as well as a crisis in the Supreme Command—all during the height of the great battles raging around Verdun. Briand intervened with dexterous argument, but General Galliéni was resolved. Stricken by an illness which compelled an early and grave operation, he had laid what he considered his testament and the last remaining service he could render France before his colleagues. When his advice was not accepted, he immediately resigned. For several days his resignation was kept a secret. Then it was explained on grounds of health, and the charge of the War Ministry was taken temporarily by the Minister of Marine. Finally, when his resolves were seen to be unshakable, a colourless but inoffensive successor was discovered in the person of General Roques, an intimate friend of Joffre and actually suggested by him. Thus did General Joffre receive a renewed lease of power sufficient to enable him to add to the dearly bought laurels of Verdun the still more costly trophies of the Somme.

Galliéni was now to quit the scene for ever. Within a fortnight of his resignation he withdrew to a private hospital for an operation—at his age of the greatest danger—but which, if successful, meant a swift restoration of activity and health. From the effects of this operation he expired on May 27. To his memory and record not only his countrymen, but also their Allies, who profited by his genius, sagacity and virtue, and might have profited far more, should not fail to do justice.

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After the disasters of 1915 an earnest effort had been made by the British, French and Russian Governments to concert their action for 1916. No sooner had Briand attained the Premiership than he used a phrase which pithily expressed the first great and obvious need of the Allies—'Unity of front.' Unity of front did not mean unity of command. That idea, although it had dawned on many minds, was not yet within the bounds of possibility. Unity of front, or 'only one front,' meant that the whole great circle of fire and steel within which the Allies were gripping the Central Powers should be treated and organized as if it were the line of a single army or a single nation; that everything planned on one part of the front should be related to everything planned on every other part of the front; that instead of a succession of disconnected offensives, a combined and simultaneous effort should be made by the three great Allies to overpower and beat down the barriers of hostile resistance. In these broad and sound conceptions Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Kitchener, Monsieur Briand, General Joffre, General Cadorna, the Czar and General Alexeieff, all four Governments and all four General Staffs, were in full accord. <sup>7</sup>

In pursuance and execution of this conception it had been decided to make a vast combined onslaught upon Germany and Austria, both in the east and in the west, during the summer months. The Russians could not be ready till June, nor the British till July. It was therefore agreed that a waiting policy should as far as possible be followed during the first six months of the year, while the Russians were re-equipping and increasing their armies, while the new British armies were perfecting their training, and while enormous masses of shells and guns were being accumulated. To these immense labours all four great nations thenceforth committed themselves.

It was further agreed that the Russians should endeavour to hold the Germans as far as possible on the northern part of the Eastern Front, and that the main Russian attack should be launched in Galicia in the southern theatre. At the same time, or in close relation to this, it was decided that a tremendous offensive, exceeding in scale anything ever previously conceived, should be delivered by the British and French, hand in hand, astride of the Somme (*à cheval sur la Somme*). It was intended to attempt to break through on a front of seventy kilometres: the English to the north of the Somme on the twenty-five kilometres from Hébuterne to Maricourt; and the French astride the Somme, but mainly to the south of it, on a forty-five kilometre front from Maricourt right down to Lassigny. Two entire British armies, the Third and Fourth, under Allenby and Rawlinson, and comprising from twenty-five to thirty divisions, constituted the British attack; and three French armies, the Second, the Sixth and the Third, comprising thirty-nine divisions, were to be placed under the command of Foch for the French sector. The whole of these five armies, aggregating over one and a half million men and supported by four or five thousand guns, were thus to be hurled upon the Germans at a moment when it was hoped they and their Austrian allies would already be heavily and critically engaged on the Eastern Frontiers. The original scheme for this stupendous battle was outlined in December, 1915, at the first Conference of the Allied General Staffs at Chantilly, and its final shape was determined at a second conference on February 14.

The ink was hardly dry on these conventions when the cannon of Verdun began to thunder, and the Germans were seen advancing successfully upon the neglected defences of that fortress. It is certainly arguable that the French would have been wise to have played with the Germans around Verdun, economizing their forces as much as possible, selling ground at a high price in German blood wherever necessary, and endeavouring to lead their enemies into a pocket or other unfavourable position. In this way they might have inflicted upon the Germans very heavy losses

without risking much themselves, and as we now know they would certainly have baffled Falkenhayn's plan of wearing out the French Army and beating it to pieces upon the anvil. By the end of June the Germans might thus have exhausted the greater part of their offensive effort, advancing perhaps a dozen miles over ground of no decisive strategic significance, while all the time the French would have been accumulating gigantic forces for an overwhelming blow upon the Somme.

However, other counsels—or shall we call them passions?—prevailed, and the whole French nation and army hurled itself into the struggle around Verdun. This decision not only wore out the French reserves and consumed the offensive strength of their army, but it greatly diminished the potential weight of the British attack which was in preparation. Already before the German attack opened, Sir Douglas Haig had taken over an additional sector of the French front, liberating, as we have seen, the Second French Army which was thus enabled to restore the situation at Verdun. As soon as the Battle of Verdun had begun, Joffre requested Haig to take over a fresh sector, and this was accordingly effected in the early days of March, thus liberating the whole of the Tenth French Army. Thus the number of British divisions resting and training for the great battle was at the outset sensibly diminished. As the Verdun conflict prolonged itself and deepened all through March, April and May the inroads upon the fighting strength and disposable surplus of the French Army became increasingly grave. And as July approached the thirty-nine French divisions of the original scheme had shrunk to an available eighteen. This greatly diminished the front of the battle and the weight behind the blow. The numbers available were reduced by at least one-third, and the front to be attacked must be contracted from seventy to about forty-five kilometres. Whereas in the original conception the main onslaught would have been made by the French with the British co-operating in great strength as a smaller army, these rôles had now been reversed by the force of events. The main effort must be made by the British, and it was the French who would co-operate to the best of their ability in a secondary rôle.

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While the eyes of the world were riveted on the soul-stirring frenzy of Verdun, and while the ponderous preparations for the Allied counter-stroke on the Somme were being completed, great events were at explosion-point in the East. To those who knew that Russia was recovering her strength with every day, with every hour that passed, who knew of the marshalling of her inexhaustible manhood, and the ever-multiplying and broadening

streams of munitions of war which were flowing towards her, the German attack on Verdun had come with a sense of indescribable relief. Russia had been brought very low in the preceding autumn, before the rearguards of the winter closed down on her torn and depleted line. But mortal injury had been warded off. Her armies had been extricated, her front was maintained, and now behind it 'the whole of Russia' was labouring to re-equip and reconstitute her power.

Few episodes of the Great War are more impressive than the resuscitation, re-equipment and renewed giant effort of Russia in 1916. It was the last glorious exertion of the Czar and the Russian people for victory before both were to sink into the abyss of ruin and horror. By the summer of 1916 Russia, who eighteen months before had been almost disarmed, who during 1915 had sustained an unbroken series of frightful defeats, had actually managed, by her own efforts and the resources of her Allies, to place in the field—organized, armed and equipped—sixty Army Corps in place of the thirty-five with which she had begun the war. The Trans-Siberian Railway had been doubled over a distance of 6,000 kilometres, as far east as Lake Baikal. A new railway 1,400 kilometres long, built through the depth of winter at the cost of unnumbered lives, linked Petrograd with the perennially ice-free waters of the Murman coast. And by both these channels munitions from the rising factories of Britain, France and Japan, or procured by British credit from the United States, were pouring into Russia in broadening streams. The domestic production of every form of war material had simultaneously been multiplied many fold.

It was however true that the new Russian armies, though more numerous and better supplied with munitions than ever before, suffered from one fatal deficiency which no Allied assistance could repair. The lack of educated men, men who at least could read and write, and of trained officers and sergeants, woefully diminished the effectiveness of her enormous masses. Numbers, brawn, cannon and shells, the skill of great commanders, the bravery of patriotic troops, were to lose two-thirds of their power for want, not of the higher military science, but of Board School education; for want of a hundred thousand human beings capable of thinking for themselves and acting with reasonable efficiency in all the minor and subordinate functions on which every vast organization—most of all the organization of modern war—depends. The mighty limbs of the giant were armed, the conceptions of his brain were clear, his heart was still true, but the nerves which could transform resolve and design into action were but partially developed or non-existent. This defect,

irremediable at the time, fatal in its results, in no way detracts from the merit or the marvel of the Russian achievement, which will for ever stand as the supreme monument and memorial of the Empire founded by Peter the Great.

At the beginning of the summer the Russian front, stretching 1,200 kilometres from the Baltic to the Roumanian frontier, was held by three main groups of armies, the whole aggregating upwards of 134 divisions: the northern group under the veteran Kouropatkine; the centre group (between the Pinsk and the Pripet) under Evert; the southern group (to the south of the Pripet) under Brusiloff. Against this array the Central Empires marshalled the German armies of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in the north, of Prince Leopold of Bavaria and General von Linsingen opposite the centre and southern centre, and the three Austrian armies of the Archduke Frederick in the south. The drain of Verdun and the temptations of the Trentino had drawn or diverted from the Eastern Front both reserves and reinforcements, and practically all the heavy artillery. And in the whole of the sector south of the Pripet, comprising all Galicia and the Bukovina, not a German division remained to sustain the armies of the Austrian Archduke against the forces of Brusiloff.

The original scheme had contemplated July 1 as the date of the general Allied attack, both in the west and in the east. But the cries of Italy from the Trentino and the obvious strain under which the French were living at Verdun led to requests being made to the Czar to intervene if possible at an earlier date. Accordingly on June 4 Brusiloff, after a thirty hours' bombardment, set his armies of over a million men in motion, and advanced in a general attack on the 350-kilometre front between the Pripet and the Roumanian frontier. The results were equally astounding to victors and vanquished, to friend and foe. It may well be that the very ante-dating of the attack imparted to it an element of surprise that a month later would have been lacking. Certainly the Austrians were entirely unprepared for the weight, vigour and enormous extent of the assault. The long loose lines in the east in no way reproduced the conditions of the Western Front. The great concentrations of artillery, the intricate systems of fortification, the continuous zones of machine-gun fire, the network of roads and railways feeding the front and enabling reserves to be thrown in thousands and tens of thousands in a few hours upon any threatened point, were entirely lacking in the east. Moreover, the Austrian armies contained large numbers of Czech troops fighting under duress for a cause they did not cherish and an Empire whose downfall they desired.

No one was more surprised than Falkenhayn.



'After the failure,' he wrote, 'of the March offensive in Lithuania and Courland, the Russian front had remained absolutely inactive. . . . There was no reason whatever to doubt that the front was equal to any attack on it by the forces opposing it at the moment. . . . General Conrad von Hötzendorf . . . declared that a Russian attack in Galicia could not be undertaken with any prospect of success in less than from four to six weeks from the time when we should have learnt that it was coming. This period at least would be required for the concentration of the Russian forces, which must be a necessary preliminary thereto. . . . However, before any indication of a movement of this sort had been noticed, to say nothing of announced, a most urgent call for assistance from our ally reached the German G.H.Q. on the 5th of June.

'The Russians, under the command of General Brusiloff, had on the previous day attacked almost the entire front, from the Styr-Bend, near Kolki, below Lutsk, right to the Roumanian borders. After a relatively short artillery preparation they had got up from their trenches and simply marched forward. Only in a few places had they even taken the trouble to form attacking groups by concentrating their reserves. It was a matter not simply of an attack in the true sense of the word, but rather of a big scale reconnaissance. . . .

'A "reconnaissance" like Brusiloff's was only possible, of course, if the General had decisive reason for holding a low opinion of his enemy's power of resistance. And on this point he made no miscalculation. His attack met with splendid success, both in Volhynia and in the Bukovina. East of Lutsk the Austro-Hungarian front was clean broken through, and in less than two days a yawning gap fully thirty miles wide had been made in it. The part of the 4th Austro-Hungarian Army, which was in line here, melted away into miserable remnants.

'Things went no better with the 7th Austro-Hungarian Army in the Bukovina. It flowed back along its entire front, and it was impossible to judge at the moment whether and when it could be brought to a halt again. . . .

'We were therefore faced with a situation which had fundamentally changed. A wholesale failure of this kind had certainly not entered into the calculations of the Chief of the General Staff (himself). He had considered it impossible.'

All along the front the Russian armies marched over the Austrian lines or through wide breaches in them. In the north the army of Kaledine advanced in three days on a 70-kilometre

<sup>1</sup> *General Headquarters 1914-1916 and its Critical Decisions: General von Falkenhayn*, pp. 244-247.

front no less than 50 kilometres, taking Lutsk. In the south the army of Letchitsky, forcing successively the lines of the Dniester and the Pruth, invested Czernovitch after an advance of 60 kilometres. The German front under Linsingen wherever attacked maintained itself unbroken or withdrew in good order in consequence of adjacent Austrian retirements. But within a week of the beginning of the offensive the Austrians had lost 100,000 prisoners, and before the end of the month their losses in killed, wounded, dispersed and prisoners amounted to nearly three-quarters of a million men. Czernovitch and practically the whole of the Bukovina had been reconquered, and the Russian troops again stood on the slopes of the Carpathians. The scale of the victory and the losses of the defeated in men, material and territory were the greatest which the war in the east had yet produced.

The Austrian offensive on the Trentino was instantly paralysed, and eight divisions were recalled and hurried to the shattered Eastern Front. Although the Battle of Verdun was at its height and Falkenhayn deeply committed to procuring at least a moral decision there, and while he could watch each week the storm clouds gathering denser and darker on the Somme, he found himself forced to withdraw eight German divisions from France to repair those dykes he had so improvidently neglected in the east, or at any rate to limit the deluge now pouring forward impetuously in so many directions. The Hindenburg-Ludendorff armies, which had successfully sustained the subsidiary attacks delivered by the Russians upon their front, were also called upon to contribute large reinforcements for the south; and an immense German effort was made to close the breaches and re-establish the Southern Front. By the end of June the failure of the Austro-German campaign of 1916, which had opened with such high prospects, was apparent. The Trentino offensive was hamstrung; Verdun was in Ludendorff's words 'an open wasting sore';<sup>1</sup> and a disaster of the first magnitude had been suffered in that very portion of the Eastern Front which had offered the most fruitful prospects to Teutonic initiative. But this was not the end. The main struggle of the year was about to begin in the west, and Roumania, convulsed with excitement at the arrival of victorious Russian armies before her very gates, loomed up black with the menace of impending war.

<sup>1</sup> *War Memories*, Vol. I, p. 267.

## CHAPTER V

### JUTLAND: THE PRELIMINARIES

*'A thousand years scarce serve to form a State ;  
An hour may lay it in the dust.'*

A Battle or an Encounter—Risks of forcing a Battle—Strategic Consequences of British Victory and Defeat—Unequal Stakes—Sir John Jellicoe—Under-water Dangers—Extreme Precautions—Jellicoe's Letter of October 14, 1914—The Admiralty Reply—Changing Conditions—Admiralty Intelligence—The Rival Fleets—The Grand Fleet at Sea—'Enemy in Sight'—Delay of the 5th Battle Squadron—Beatty's Decision—Hipper's Trap—The Battle-cruiser Action—The Immortal Marine—The Crisis Surmounted—Intervention of the 5th Battle Squadron—The High Sea Fleet in Sight—The Run to the North—The Ordeal of the 5th Battle Squadron—The End of the First Phase.

THERE are profound differences between a battle where both sides wish for a full trial of strength and skill, and a battle where one side has no intention of fighting to a finish, and seeks only to retire without disadvantage or dishonour from an unequal and undesired combat. The problems before the Commanders, the conditions of the conflict itself, are widely different in a fleeting encounter—no matter how large its scale—from those of a main trial of strength. In an encounter between forces obviously unequal, the object of the weaker is to escape, and that of the stronger to catch and destroy them. Many of the tactical processes and manœuvres appropriate to a battle where both sides throw their whole might into the scale and continue at death-grips till the climax is reached and victory declares itself are not adapted to a situation in which keeping contact is the task of the stronger and evasion the duty of the weaker.

This is especially true of the preliminaries; the mode of approach, the deployment of the fleet, the development of the fire, the methods of meeting or parrying the attack of torpedo craft, would naturally be modified according to the view taken of the intentions of the enemy. If he were expected to seek a fight to a finish, there would be no need for hurry. There would be every reason to economize loss in the earlier stages and make every ship and gun play its maximum part in a supreme crisis. If on the other hand the enemy was certain to make off as soon as he saw himself in the presence of very superior forces, it would be necessary

for the stronger fleet to run greater risks if it was determined to force a battle. Not only the light forces and the fast heavy ships would be thrown forward to attack, but the Battle Fleet itself would be driven at a speed which would leave the slowest squadrons and the slowest ships tailing away behind. Thus the pursuing squadrons would not come into action simultaneously but successively.

Moreover, modern inventions give new advantages to a retreating fleet. It may entice its enemy across mine-fields through which perhaps it alone knows the channels, or into a carefully prepared ambushade of submarines. It can throw out mines behind it. It can fire torpedoes across the course of a pursuing fleet, and itself remain outside torpedo range. From these and other technical causes there can be no doubt that the task of forcing a battle against the enemy's desire involves a far higher degree of risk to the stronger fleet than would arise in a trial of strength willingly accepted or sought for by both sides. In studying the naval encounter of Jutland, the first question upon which it is necessary to form an opinion is what extra degree of risk, beyond the risk of a pitched battle, the British Fleet was justified in incurring in the hopes of bringing the Germans to action and destroying them. This question cannot be decided without reference to the general strategic situation on the seas.

If the German Fleet had been decisively defeated on May 31, 1916, in battle off Jutland, very great reliefs and advantages would have been gained by the Allies. The psychological effect upon the German nation cannot be estimated, but might conceivably have been profound. The elimination of the German Battle Fleet would have been an important easement to Great Britain, enabling men and material required by the Admiralty for the Grand Fleet to be diverted for the support of the Army. It would have brought the entry of the Baltic into immediate practical possibility. Whether the presence of the British squadrons in the Baltic during the winter of 1916 and the spring of 1917 would have prevented the Russian Revolution is a speculative question, but one which cannot be overlooked. The reactions of a great defeat at sea upon the U-boat attack of 1917, which the Germans were actively preparing, are diverse. On the one hand the disappearance of most of the German battleships might have led to a greater concentration of skilled men and resources upon the development of the U-boat campaign. On the other hand the liberation of the Grand Fleet flotillas and the increased sense of mastery at sea might well have led the Admiralty to more aggressive action against the German river mouths and to an earlier frustration of the U-boat attack. These important advantages must however be compared with the consequences to Britain and her Allies which

would immediately have followed from a decisive British defeat. The trade and food-supply of the British islands would have been paralysed. Our armies on the Continent would have been cut from their base by superior naval force. All the transportation of the Allies would have been jeopardized and hampered. The United States could not have intervened in the war. Starvation and invasion would have descended upon the British people. Ruin utter and final would have overwhelmed the Allied cause.

The great disparity of the results at stake in a battle between the British and German navies can never be excluded from our thoughts. In a pitched battle fought to a conclusion on British terms between the British and German navies our preponderance was always sufficient to make victory reasonably probable, and in the spring of 1916 so great as to have made it certain. No such assurance could be felt, in the earlier days at any rate, about the results of a piecemeal pursuing engagement against a retreating enemy. If that enemy succeeded in drawing part of our Fleet into a trap of mines or submarines, and eight or nine of the most powerful ships were blown up, the rest might have been defeated by the gunfire of the German fleet before the whole strength of the British line of battle could have reached the scene. This as we know was always the German dream: but there would certainly be no excuse for a Commander to take risks of this character with the British Fleet at a time when the situation on sea was entirely favourable to us. Neither would there be any defence for a British Admiralty which endeavoured to put pressure upon their Admiral to try to achieve some spectacular result against his better judgment, and by overstraining risks when the prizes on either side were so unequal. To be able to carry on all business on salt water in every part of the world without appreciable let or hindrance, to move armies, to feed nations, to nourish commerce in the teeth of war, imply possession of the command of the sea. If these are the tests, that priceless sovereignty was ours already. We had the upper hand; we had the advantage; time—so it then seemed, so in the end it proved—was on our side. We were under no compulsion to fight a naval battle except under conditions which made victory morally certain and serious defeat, as far as human vision goes, impossible. A British Admiralissimo cannot be blamed for making these grave and solid reasons the basis of his thought and the foundation from which all his decisions should spring.

In the tense naval controversy upon Jutland the keenest minds in the Navy have sifted every scrap of evidence. Every minute has been measured. The speed, the course, the position of every ship great or small, at every period in the operation, have been scrutinized. The information in the possession of every Admiral in each phase has been examined, weighed, canvassed. The

dominant school of naval thought and policy are severe critics of Sir John Jellicoe. They disclaim all personal grounds or motives ; they affirm that the tradition and future of the British Navy join in demanding that a different doctrine, other methods and above all another spirit must animate our captains at sea, if ever and whenever the Navy is once again at war. They declare that such an affirmation is more important to the public than the feelings of individuals, the decorous maintenance of appearances, the preservation of a superficial harmony, or the respect which may rightly be claimed by a Commander-in-Chief who, over the major portion of the war, discharged an immense and indeed inestimable responsibility.

Sir John Jellicoe was in experience and administrative capacity unquestionably superior to any British Admiral. He knew every aspect and detail of his profession. Afloat or at the Admiralty his intellect, energy, and efficiency won equal confidence from those he served and those he led. Moreover, he was a fine sea officer, capable of handling in the most difficult circumstances of weather and navigation the immense Fleet with which he was entrusted. He had served on active service in more than one campaign with courage and distinction. Before the war he was marked out above all others for the supreme command. When at its outbreak he assumed this great duty, his appointment was acclaimed alike by the nation and the Navy. Nearly two years of the full strain of war had only enhanced the confidence and affection with which he was regarded by his officers and men. In judging his discharge of his task we must consider first his knowledge and point of view ; secondly, the special conditions of the war ; and thirdly, the spirit which should impel the Royal Navy.

The standpoint of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Grand Fleet was unique. His responsibilities were on a different scale from all others. It might fall to him as to no other man—Sovereign, Statesman, Admiral or General—to issue orders which in the space of *two or three hours* might nakedly decide who won the war. The destruction of the British Battle Fleet would be final. Jellicoe was the only man on either side who could lose the war in an afternoon. First and foremost, last and dominating, in the mind of the Commander-in-Chief stood the determination not to hazard the Battle Fleet. The risk of under-water damage by torpedo and mine, and the consequent destruction of British battleship superiority, lay heavy upon him. It far outweighed all considerations of the results on either side of gunfire. It was the main preoccupation of Admiralty thought before the war. From the opening of hostilities the spectacle of great vessels vanishing in a few moments as the result of an under-water explosion constantly deepened the impression. Alone among naval authorities

of the highest order Sir Reginald Custance had maintained the contrary view, and had ceaselessly laboured to correct what he conceived to be the exaggerated importance attached to the Whitehead torpedo. Again and again I have heard him contend that the torpedo would play only a very unimportant part in a great sea battle, and that the issue would be decided by a combination of gunfire and manœuvre. The results of Jutland seem to vindicate this unfashionable opinion. For twelve hours the main fleets of Britain and Germany were at sea in close contact with one another both by day and by night, amid torpedo flotillas of the highest strength and quality numbered by scores, and only three large ships out of over a hundred exposed to the menace were seriously damaged by the torpedo. The purely passive rôle enjoined upon the British destroyers during the night may partially explain this result. It was certainly at variance with the pre-war expectations of most of the leading naval authorities in England.

The safety and overwhelming strength of the Grand Fleet was Jellicoe's all-embracing aim. Its strength must be continually augmented. Every service ancillary to the Battle Fleet must be continually developed on the largest scale and to the highest efficiency. Every vessel that the northern harbours could contain must be placed at his disposal. With this object the Commander-in-Chief in his official letters to the Admiralty and by every other channel open to him continually dwelt upon the weakness and deficiencies of the force at his disposal, and at the same time magnified the power of the enemy. This habit of mind had been acquired during many years of struggle for money with peace-time Governments. It had now become ingrained in his nature. We have seen in the first volume evidences of this cautious and far from sanguine mood.<sup>1</sup>

The enemy, according to his view, would be more numerous than the Admiralty Intelligence Department admitted. Their best ships would be found re-armed with much heavier guns. The speed of these vessels would turn out to be greater than we knew. Almost certainly they had some astonishing surprises in store. 'The Germans,' he had written to Lord Fisher on December 4, 1914, 'would have eight flotillas comprising eighty-eight torpedo boat destroyers, all of which would certainly be ready at the selected moment. They had five torpedoes each: total 440 torpedoes—*unless I can strike at them first*.' He then argued that he might fall as low as 32, or even 28, destroyers. 'You know,' he added, 'the difficulty and objections to turning away from the enemy in a Fleet action: but with such a menace I am bound to do it, unless my own torpedo boat destroyers can stop or neutralize the movement.' At the date which this story has now reached he

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pages 398-9.

was convinced that the 10,000 yards correctly assigned by the Admiralty Intelligence Department as the extreme range of the German torpedo was too little: 15,000 yards must be the margin of safety on which he should rely. Even in 1917 at the end of his time at the Admiralty as First Sea Lord, when a large part of the American Navy was serving with our own and when the strength of the Allied Fleets was at least four times that of their antagonists, he is still found seriously disquieted at his relative strength in battle-cruisers. It is obvious that there are limits beyond which this outlook ceases to contribute to the gaining of victory in war. But this does not affect the main argument.

All Jellicoe's thought was rightly centred upon the naval battle which he would some day have to fight. On October 14, 1914, he addressed to the Admiralty a letter which reveals his deepest conviction and his consistent intentions. From this extensive quotation is necessary.

' . . . The Germans have shown that they rely to a very great extent on submarines, mines and torpedoes, and there can be no doubt whatever that they will endeavour to make the fullest use of these weapons in a fleet action, especially since they possess an actual superiority over us in these particular directions. It therefore becomes necessary to consider our own tactical methods in relation to these forms of attack. . . . ' ' The German submarines, if worked as is expected with the battle fleet, can be used in one of two ways:—

- (a) With the cruisers, or possibly with destroyers;
- (b) With the battle fleet.

' In the first case the submarines would probably be led by the cruisers to a position favourable for attacking our battle fleet as it advanced to deploy, and in the second case they might be kept in a position in rear, or to the flank, of the enemy's battle fleet, which would move in the direction required to draw our own Fleet into contact with the submarines.

' The first move at (a) should be defeated by our own cruisers, provided we have a sufficient number present, as they should be able to force the enemy's cruisers to action at a speed which would interfere with submarine tactics. . . .

' The second move at (b) can be countered by judicious handling of our battle fleet, but may, and probably will, involve a refusal to comply with the enemy's tactics by moving in the invited direction. If, for instance, the enemy battle fleet were to turn away from an advancing fleet, I should assume that the intention was to lead us over mines and submarines, and should decline to be so drawn.

' I desire particularly to draw the attention of their Lordships



to this point, since it may be deemed a refusal of battle, and, indeed, might possibly result in failure to bring the enemy to action as soon as is expected and hoped.

'Such a result would be absolutely repugnant to the feelings of all British Naval Officers and men, but with new and untried methods of warfare new tactics must be devised to meet them.

'I feel that such tactics, if not understood, may bring odium upon me, but so long as I have the confidence of their Lordships, I intend to pursue what is, in my considered opinion, the proper course to defeat and annihilate the enemy's battle fleet, without regard to uninstructed opinion or criticism.

'The situation is a difficult one. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that half of our battle fleet might be disabled by under-water attack before the guns opened fire at all, if a false step is made, and I feel that I must constantly bear in mind the great probability of such attack and be prepared tactically to prevent its success.

'The safeguard against submarines will consist in moving the battle fleet at very high speed to a flank before deployment takes place or the gun action commences.

'This will take us off the ground on which the enemy desires to fight, but it may, of course, result in his refusal to follow me . . . .

'The object of this letter is to place my views before their Lordships, and to direct their attention to the alterations in preconceived ideas of battle tactics which are forced upon us by the anticipated appearance in a fleet action of submarines and minelayers. . . .'

Lord Fisher, Sir Arthur Wilson, and the Chief of the Naval Staff, then Admiral Sturdee, all considered fully this communication, which was of course only one of a regular stream of reports, despatches and private letters from the Commander-in-Chief. They had no doubt what answer should be sent. They advised me that Sir John Jellicoe's statement should receive the general approval of the Board of Admiralty. I agreed fully with their advice. An answer in the contrary sense was obviously impossible. To tell the Commander-in-Chief of the British Fleet, in the strategic situation which then existed, that even if he suspected the German Fleet were retiring to lead him into a trap of mines and submarines, he should nevertheless follow directly after them, and that if he failed to bring them to battle by manœuvring against his better judgment, no matter what the risk, he would be held blameworthy, would have been madness. The fullest possible latitude of manœuvre, the strongest assurances of personal confidence, were the indefeasible right of any officer in his great

situation. Moreover, in October, 1914, our margins of superiority were at their minimum. A plurality of only six or seven Dreadnoughts could be counted on with certainty. We had never met the enemy's great ships in battle. No one could say with certainty to what degree of excellence their gunnery or torpedo practice had attained, or whether their projectiles or their tactics contained some utterly unexpected feature. There was certainly no reason in this first phase of the naval war for seeking a battle except on the best conditions.

I take the fullest responsibility for approving at this date the answer proposed to me by the First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, and the Chief of the Staff. If I had not agreed with it, I should not have allowed it to pass unchallenged. But I was far from sharing the Commander-in-Chief's impressions upon the relative strength and quality of the British and German Fleets. I always believed that the British line of battle could fight the Germans ship for ship, and should never decline an encounter on those terms. I always regarded every addition to equality on our side as a precautionary advantage, not necessary to the gaining of victory, but justified by the far greater stake which a naval battle involved to Britain than to Germany. These views appeared to be vindicated three months later when on January 24, 1915, Admiral Beatty with five battle-cruisers met Admiral Hipper with four. On the morrow of that action, January 26, I wrote to Sir John Jellicoe as follows:—

'The action on Sunday bears out all I have thought of the relative British and German strength. It is clear that at five to four they have no thought but fight, and that a battle fought out on this margin could have only one ending. The immense power of the 13.5-inch gun is clearly decisive on the minds of the enemy, as well as on the progress of the action. I should not feel the slightest anxiety at the idea of your engaging with equality. Still I think it would be bad management on our part if your superiority was not much nearer six to four than five to four, even under the worst conditions.'

And to the Prime Minister, January 24, 1915, 3.45 p.m.:—

'This action gives us a good line for judging the results of a general battle. It may be roughly said that we should probably fight six to four at the worst, whereas to-day was five to four.'

In the great episode which has now to be described the British superiority was not five to four, nor six to four; it was at least two to one. Sir John Jellicoe is fully justified in pointing to his letter of October 14 as a proof that his conduct in the stress of action was in accord with what he had long purposed in cold blood, and with a general tactical policy which he had already laid before

the Board of Admiralty. But I do not accept on behalf of the Board of Admiralty of 1914 any responsibility for the actual conduct by the Commander-in-Chief of an operation which took place eighteen months later in conditions of relative strength different from those which existed in October, 1914, and, as will be seen as this account proceeds, in tactical circumstances entirely different from those which were contemplated by him in his letter. A perception that a decisive battle is not a necessity in a particular situation, and ought not to be purchased at a heavy risk, should not engender a defensive habit of mind or scheme of tactics.

After these preliminary observations the story may be told in its simplest form, with pauses to examine the issues involved at the crucial moments.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the first volume of this account I recorded the events which secured for the Admiralty the incomparable advantage of reading the plans and orders of the enemy before they were executed. Without the cryptographers' department there would have been no Battle of Jutland. But for that department, the whole course of the naval war would have been different. The British Fleet could not have remained continuously at sea without speedily wearing down its men and machinery. Unless it had remained almost continuously at sea, the Germans would have been able to bombard two or three times a month all our East Coast towns. The simplest measurements on the chart will show that their battle-cruisers and other fast vessels could have reached our shores, inflicted an injury, and returned each time safely, or at least without superior attack, to their own home bases. Such a state of affairs would not necessarily have altered the final course of the war. The nation would have been forced to realize that the ruin of its East Coast towns was as much their part of the trial and burden as the destruction of so many Provinces to France. After national resentment had expended itself in the removal of one or more Governments or Boards of Admiralty, a resolute people would have faced the facts with which they were confronted, would indeed have derived from them a new vigour of resistance.

But it so chanced that they were spared this particular ordeal. The secret signal-books of the German Navy fell into the hands of the Russians in the Baltic when the light cruiser *Magdeburg* was sunk in October, 1914, and were conveyed to London. These signal-books and the charts connected with them were subjected to a study in Whitehall in which self-effacing industry and imaginative genius reached their highest degree. By the aid of these books and the deductions drawn from their use, the Admiralty acquired the power of reading a proportion of the German wireless

messages. Well as was the secret kept, the coincidence of events aroused suspicion in the German mind. They knew the British squadrons could not always be at sea; and yet often when a German raid was launched, there at the interception point, or very near it, were found important British naval forces. They therefore redoubled the precaution of their codes. Moreover, they had themselves pierced to some extent the British codes, and had actually established at Neumünster a station for transmitting to their Fleet intercepted British messages. Nevertheless, during the central period of the war at any rate the Admiralty were capable of presenting to the Fleet a stream of valuable information.

The Naval Staff discovered in the last week of May, 1916, peculiar symptoms of impending activity in the German Fleet. The Intelligence had from other sources reported the appointment of Admiral Scheer to the chief command. This officer was reputed at the time to be the advocate of an aggressive war policy at sea. He had espoused an unlimited submarine campaign. He was the nominee of Tirpitz the Bold. The cautious and even timid tactics adopted by the German Navy under the direct orders of the Emperor ever since Beatty had broken into the Heligoland Bight at the end of August, 1914, were now to be abandoned. Admiral Scheer planned offensive action against the English coast for the purpose of drawing the British Fleet out over prepared ambushes of submarines, and then if Fortune was favourable fighting that weakened Fleet, or better still a detached division of it, a decisive battle for the command of the seas. The imminence of an important operation was deduced by the Admiralty from the whole body of their intelligence.

At five o'clock on May 30 the Admiralty informed the Fleet that there were indications of the Germans putting to sea. The Fleet, which had been previously ordered to raise steam, was directed to concentrate 'eastward of the Long Forties' (about 60 miles east of the Scottish coast) ready for eventualities.

The two Fleets that put to sea in the evening of May 30, 1916, constituted the culminating manifestation of naval force in the history of the world. But tremendous as was the power of the German Fleet, it could not compare with the British in numbers, speed or gun power. The British marshalled 28 Dreadnought battleships and 9 battle-cruisers against Admiral Scheer's 16 Dreadnoughts and 5 battle-cruisers. In addition the Germans had 6 pre-Dreadnought ships of the Deutschland class, whose slow speed and poor armament made them a source of anxiety to the German Commander. The speed of the British Fleet was decidedly superior. Its slowest battleship could steam 20 knots, while the 5th Battle Squadron, comprising four *Queen Elizabeths*, the strongest and swiftest battleships afloat, was capable of steam-

ing 24 to 25 knots. The fastest German battleship could only steam 21 knots, while the 6 Deutschlands reduced the combined maximum speed of the Battle Fleet to 16 knots.

Still greater was the British superiority in gun fire. Sir John Jellicoe's battleships and battle-cruisers mounted 272 heavy guns against 200 German. But this superiority in numbers was magnified by an enormous superiority in size: 48 British 15-inch, 10 14-inch, 142 13.5-inch, and 144 12-inch guns were matched against 144 German 12-inch and 100 11-inch, making a total British broadside of 396,700 lbs. against a German of 180,958.

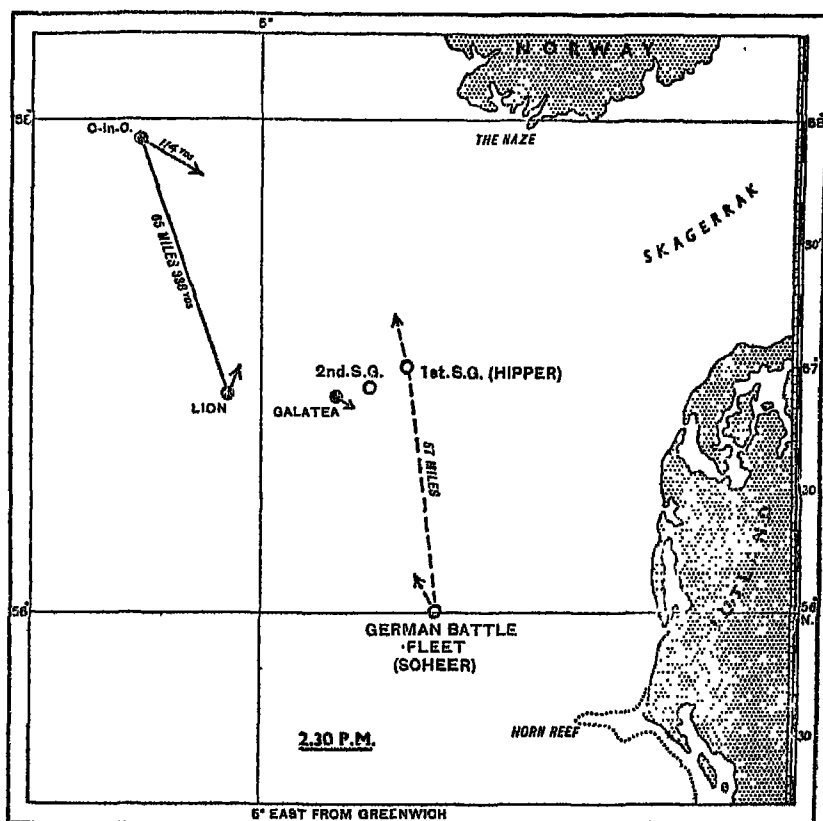
The torpedo strength of the two fleets, including vessels of every class, was numerically almost equal. The British mounted 382 21-inch and 75 18-inch torpedo tubes; the Germans 362 19.7-inch and 107 17.7 inch. The smaller short-ranged class of torpedoes on either side were hardly likely to be serviceable in a daylight action; and the British 21-inch were slightly superior to the German 19.7-inch in range and in speed. A clear advantage even in this arm therefore rested with the British.

The British preponderance in capital ships was fully maintained in cruisers and destroyers. The British had 31 cruisers at sea, of which eight were the most powerful armoured cruisers of the pre-Dreadnought era: the Germans had 11. On the long-expected day of battle Sir John Jellicoe, although not provided with the cruisers and destroyers of the Harwich force, could muster 85 destroyers to the German 72. As in the case of the larger ships, the numerical superiorities alike in cruisers and in destroyers were enhanced by a great additional strength in gun power in every class, and a large advantage in the speed of the cruisers and in the size of the destroyers. Inferiority in any important arm or factor cannot be discerned at any point in the British array.

In consequence of the Admiralty orders, Sir John Jellicoe concentrated from Scapa Flow and Cromarty 24 Dreadnought battleships, 3 battle-cruisers, 3 cruiser squadrons and 3 destroyer flotillas in the 'Long Forties' on the morning of May 31. He had sent Admiral Beatty from the Forth about 65 miles ahead of him with 6 battle-cruisers, 2 light cruiser squadrons, 2 flotillas and—massive addition—4 *Queen Elizabeths*. In this formation both were to steam towards the Heligoland Bight till 2 p.m. when, if nothing was seen, Beatty was to come back into sight of the Battle Fleet, which would turn eastward for a further sweep towards the Horn Reef before returning home. The distance of 65 miles between the main Fleet and its powerful scouting forces had been criticized as excessive. It precluded visual contact between the two portions of the Fleet, and impeded their harmonious combination in the all-important preliminary phases of a great battle. If Beatty, arriving at his rendezvous, found the enemy there or thereabouts,

Jellicoe would be out of tactical relation and too far off to force a battle. This disposition had however been used several times before ; and Beatty with his fast powerful ships was quite capable of acting independently. Both Admirals had been out so often on these sweeps that though all precautions were observed neither, on the skeleton information available, had any particular expectation of encountering the enemy.

The day was bright and calm, and as the morning wore away such hopes as they had indulged gradually departed. The last



gleam was finally extinguished by a signal from the Admiralty at 12.35 p.m. stating that directionals (i.e. directional wireless) placed the enemy flagship in the Jade at 11.10 a.m. Both Admirals tarried on their course to examine suspicious trawlers, and both were a few miles short of their prescribed positions and out of their reckoning when the hour for the battle-cruisers to turn

northwards and close the Battle Fleet approached.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Beatty had already made the signal for an almost complete turn about, and at 2.15 p.m. all his heavy ships had obeyed it. His cruiser screen was in process of turning on to the new direction when the light cruiser *Galatea* saw a steamer about eight miles off apparently stopped and molested by two strange vessels. At 2.20 she signalled: 'Enemy in sight. Two cruisers probably hostile bearing south-east, course unknown.' The full situation is exposed in the plan on page 1023. The strange vessels were two of the leading torpedo-boats of the German Second Scouting Group. All the British light cruisers began spontaneously to draw towards the *Galatea*, and eight minutes later she opened fire. One after another German light cruisers and destroyers emerged and defined themselves from the dimness of the horizon, and behind them a long smoke cloud declared the presence of important hostile forces.

The *Galatea's* message at 2.20 and the sound of her guns at 2.28 were sufficient for Admiral Beatty. A hostile enterprise of some kind was in progress. German warships were at sea. At 2.32 the *Lion*, having already warned her consorts by signal of her intentions, turned about again, and increasing her speed to 22 knots set off in pursuit, steering for the Horn Reef Channel and meaning to cut whatever enemy might be abroad from their harbours. All the battle-cruisers followed the *Lion*, and executed the Vice-Admiral's order. But the 5th Battle Squadron, 4½ miles astern, continued to carry out the previous instructions, and for eight minutes steered in exactly the opposite direction along the left leg of a northward zigzag, as if oblivious to the vital change in the situation. During these eight minutes the 5th Battle Squadron was losing touch with the battle-cruisers at the rate of over forty miles an hour. When eventually they turned at 2.40 they were already 10 miles behind the van. This loss of distance and time their best efforts were not able fully to retrieve before action was joined.

One of the many controversies of Jutland centres around this delay in turning the 5th Battle Squadron. On the one hand it is contended that Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas who commanded it did not make out the signal flags until 2.40.<sup>2</sup> On the other, it is claimed that he knew at 2.20 that enemy ships were in sight; that the *Barham*, his flagship, received at 2.30 by wireless the course about to be steered by the *Lion*,<sup>3</sup> that his general and dominant orders were to keep supporting station 5 miles from the *Lion*; that whatever the difficulty in reading the signal flags, the movements of the battle-cruisers were obvious; that no one on the

<sup>1</sup> The main facts and times throughout this account are taken from the Official Admiralty Narrative of Jutland.

<sup>2</sup> Official Narrative: Lord Jellicoe's Remarks, Appendix G, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> Admiralty footnote 2 to Lord Jellicoe's Remarks.

*Barham's* bridge could miss seeing all the six enormous British ships only 9,000 yards away suddenly turn about and steer eastward towards the enemy; and that no flag signals or wireless orders were needed to require Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas's battle squadron to conform to the movements of the force and of the Commander his whole purpose and duty was to support. Such are the rival views, and decision upon them is scarcely difficult. It is common ground between all parties that Admiral Evan-Thomas, once he realized the situation, did all in his power to recover the lost distance, and that, profiting by the manœuvring deviations of the converging and fighting lines, he in fact recovered upwards of four miles of it. The result however of his eight minutes' delay in turning was inexorably to keep him and his tremendous guns out of the action for the first most critical and most fatal half-hour, and even thereafter to keep him at extreme range.

But the question has also been raised: was Admiral Beatty right to turn instantly in pursuit of the enemy? Ought he not first to have closed on the 5th Battle Squadron and turned his whole ten great ships together? To this question the answer also seems clear. It is the duty of a Commander, whenever possible, to concentrate a superior force for battle. But Beatty's six battle-cruisers were in themselves superior in numbers, speed, and gun power to the whole of the German battle-cruisers, even if, as was not at this moment certain, any or all of these were at sea. The issue for the British Admiral was not therefore whether to concentrate a superior force or not, but whether, having concentrated a superior force, to steam for six minutes away from the enemy in order to concentrate an overwhelming force. Six minutes' steaming away from the enemy might mean a loss of six thousand yards in pursuit. The last time Beatty had seen German ships was when Hipper's battle-cruisers faded out of the sight of the crippled *Lion* sixteen months before at the Dogger Bank. The impression that every minute counted was dominant in his mind. Why should he wait to become stronger when by every test of paper and every memory of battle he was already strong enough? Had the 5th Battle Squadron turned when he turned, it would have been in close support if fighting occurred and took an adverse turn. The doctrine that after sufficient force has been concentrated an Admiral should delay, and at the risk of losing the whole opportunity gather a still larger force, was one which could only be doubtfully applied even to the Battle Fleet, and would paralyse the action of fast scouting forces. It would however no doubt have been better if the original cruising formation of the battle-cruisers and the 5th Battle Squadron had been more compact. But the facts, when at 2.32 Beatty decided that the enemy



was present in sufficient strength to justify turning the heavy ships about, made it his clear duty to steam at once and at the utmost speed in their direction. All that impulse, all that ardour give was no doubt present in the Admiral's mind ; but these were joined by all that the coldest science of war and the longest view of naval history proclaimed.

It was unlikely that no stronger enemy forces should be behind the German scouting screen: but up till this moment nothing but light cruisers and destroyers had appeared. Now at about 3.20 the *New Zealand* sighted five enemy ships on her starboard bow ; and from 3.31 onwards the *Lion* distinguished one after another the whole five German battle-cruisers. Admiral von Hipper had for an hour been passing through experiences similar to those of Admiral Beatty. His light cruisers had brushed into British scouting ships. He had hurried forward to their aid. Suddenly at 3.20 he was confronted with the apparition of Beatty's six battle-cruisers bearing down on him at full speed, accompanied by their flotillas and light cruisers and supported by the menace of dark smoke banks against the western sky. As on January 24, 1915, he acted with promptitude. He immediately turned about and ran apparently for home. But this time there were two new factors at work. Beatty knew for certain from their relative position in the sea that he could force his enemy to battle. Hipper knew that he was drawing Beatty into the jaws of the advancing High Sea Fleet. We see these splendid squadrons shearing through the waters that will soon be lashed by their cannonade, each Commander with the highest hopes—the British Admiral exulting because he had surely overtaken his foe ; the German nursing the secret of his trap. So for a space both fleets drove forward in a silence.

The combat of the battle-cruisers which preceded the encounter of the main fleets off Jutland is a self-contained episode. Both Admirals, tactics apart, wished for a trial of strength and quality. Human beings have never wielded so resolutely such tremendous engines or such intense organizations of destruction. The most powerful guns ever used, the highest explosives ever devised, the fastest and the largest ships of war ever launched, the cream of the officers and men of the British and German nations, all that the martial science of either Navy could achieve—clashed against each other in this rigorous though intermittent duel. Each in turn faced an adverse superiority of numbers ; each had behind him supporting forces which, could they be made available, would have involved the destruction of the other. Hipper counted on the High Sea Fleet, and Beatty could always fall back on his four *Queen Elizabeths*. Each in turn retired before superior forces and endeavoured to draw his opponent into overwhelming disadvan-

tage. The officers and the men on both sides showed themselves completely unaffected in their decisions and conduct by the frightful apparatus which they used upon each other ; and their conflict represents in its intensity the concentration and the consummation of the war effort of man. The battle-cruiser action would of course have been eclipsed by a general battle between the main Fleets. But since this never occurred to any serious extent, the two hours' fight between Beatty and Hipper constitutes the prodigy of modern war on sea.

The detailed story of the action has been told so often and told so well that it needs only brief repetition here. Both the German and French accounts are excellent, and the British Official Narrative is a model of exact and yet stirring professional description. The salient features can be recognized by anyone.

Both sides deliberately converged to effective striking distance. Fire was opened by the *Lützow* and answered by the *Lion* a little after a quarter to four. Each ship engaged its respective antagonist. As there were six British to five German battle-cruisers, the



*Lion* and the *Princess Royal* were able to concentrate on the enemy's flagship *Lützow*. The chances of the battle on either side led to discrepancies in the selection of targets, and sometimes two British ships were firing at one German, while another was ignored, or *vice versa*. Two minutes after the great guns had opened fire at about 14,000 yards, the *Lion* was hit twice; and the third salvo of the *Princess Royal* struck the *Lützow*. On both sides four guns at a time were fired, and at every discharge four shells each weighing about half a ton smote target or water in a volley. In the first thirty-seven minutes of an action which lasted above two hours, one-third of the British force was destroyed. At four o'clock the *Indefatigable*, after twelve minutes at battery with the *Von der Tann*, hit by three simultaneous shells from a salvo of four, blew up and sank almost without survivors. Twenty-six minutes later the *Queen Mary*, smitten amidships by a plunging

salvo from the *Derfflinger*, burst into flame, capsized, and after thirty seconds exploded into a pillar of smoke which rose 800 feet in the air, bearing with it for 200 feet such items as a 50-foot steamboat. The *Tiger* and the *New Zealand*, following her at the speed of an ordinary train, and with only 500 yards between them, had barely time to sheer off port and starboard to avoid her wreck. The *Tiger* passed through the smoke cloud black as night, and her gunnery officer, unable to fire, took advantage of the pitch-darkness to reset to zero the director controls of his four turrets.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the *Lion*, after being eight minutes in action, was hit on her midship turret (Q) by a shell which, but for a sublime act of personal devotion and comprehension, would have been fatal.

All the crew of the turret except its commanding officer, Major Hervey (Royal Marine Artillery), and his sergeant were instantly killed; and Major Hervey had both his legs shattered or torn off. Each turret in a capital ship is a self-contained organism. It is seated in the hull of the vessel like a fort; it reaches from the armoured gun-house visible to all, 50 feet downwards to the very keel. Its intricate hydraulic machinery, its ammunition trunk communicating with the shell-rooms and magazines—all turn together in whatever direction its twin guns may point. The shell of the *Lützow* wrecked the turret and set the wreckage on fire. The shock flung and jammed one of the guns upwards, and twenty minutes later the cartridge which was in its breech slid out. It caught fire and ignited the other charges in the gun-cages. The flash from these passed down the trunk to the charges at the bottom. None but dead and dying remained in the turret. All had been finished by the original shell burst. The men in the switchboard department and the handling parties of the shell-room were instantly killed by the flash of the cordite fire. The blast passed through and through the turret in all its passages and foundations, and rose 200 feet above its gaping roof. But the doors of the magazines were closed. Major Hervey, shattered, weltering, stifled, seared, had found it possible to give the order down the voice tube: 'Close magazine doors and flood magazines.' So the *Lion* drove on her course unconscious of her peril, or by what expiring breath it had been effectually averted. In the long, rough, glorious history of the Royal Marines there is no name and no deed which in its character and its consequences ranks above this.

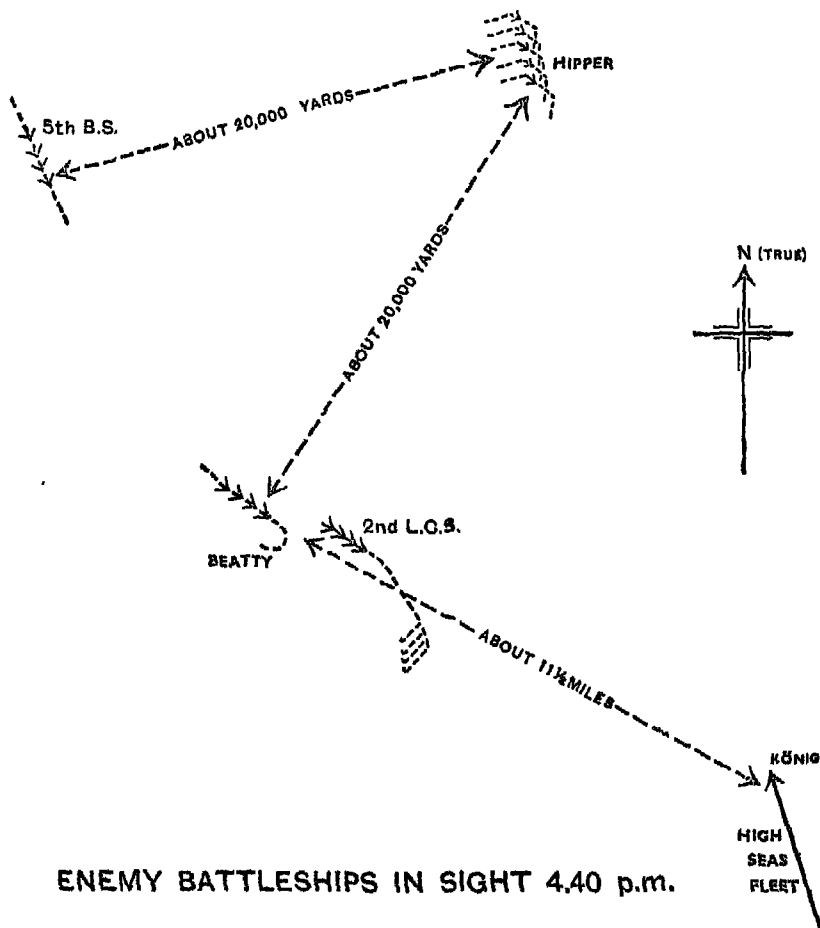
Meanwhile the Vice-Admiral, pacing the bridge among the shell fragments rebounding from the water, and like Nelson of old in the brunt of the enemy's fire, has learned that the *Indefatigable* and the *Queen Mary* have been destroyed, and that his own magazines are menaced by fire. It is difficult to compare

<sup>1</sup> *Fighting at Jutland.*

sea with land war. But each battle-cruiser was a unit comparable at least to a complete infantry division. Two divisions out of his six have been annihilated in the twinkling of an eye. The enemy, whom he could not defeat with six ships to five, are now five ships to four. Far away all five German battle-cruisers—grey smudges changing momentarily into 'rippling sheets of flame'—are still intact and seemingly invulnerable. 'Nevertheless,' proceeds the official narrative, 'the squadron continued its course undismayed.' But the movement of these blind, inanimate castles of steel was governed at this moment entirely by the spirit of a single man. Had he faltered, had he taken less than a conqueror's view of the British fighting chances, all these great engines of sea power and war power would have wobbled off in meaningless disarray. This is a moment on which British naval historians will be glad to dwell; and the actual facts deserve to be recorded. The *Indefatigable* had disappeared beneath the waves. The *Queen Mary* had towered up to heaven in a pillar of fire. The *Lion* was in flames. A tremendous salvo struck upon or about her following ship, the *Princess Royal*, which vanished in a cloud of spray and smoke. A signalman sprang on to the *Lion's* bridge with the words: '*Princess Royal* blown up, sir.' On this the Vice-Admiral said to his Flag Captain, 'Chatfield, there seems to be something wrong with our — ships to-day. Turn two points to port,' i.e., two points nearer the enemy.

Thus the crisis of the battle was surmounted. All the German damage was done in the first half-hour. As the action proceeded the British battle-cruisers, although reduced to an inferiority in numbers, began to assert an ascendancy over the enemy. Their guns became increasingly effective, and they themselves received no further serious injury. The deterioration in the accuracy and rate of the German fire during the next hour and a half was obvious. Each side in turn manœuvred nearer to or farther from the enemy in order to frustrate his aim. And from ten minutes past four the 5th Battle Squadron had begun to fire, at the long range of 17,000 yards, upon Admiral von Hipper's last two ships. The influence of this intervention, tardy but timely, is somewhat lightly treated by the British official narrators. It receives the fullest testimony in the German accounts. The four mighty ships of Admiral Evan-Thomas threw their 15-inch shells with astonishing accuracy across the great distances which separated them from the German rear. If only they had been 5,000 yards closer, the defeat, if not the destruction, of Hipper's squadron was inevitable. That they were not 5,000 yards closer was due entirely to their slowness in grasping the situation when the first contact was made with the enemy. However, they now came thundering into battle; and their arrival within effective range

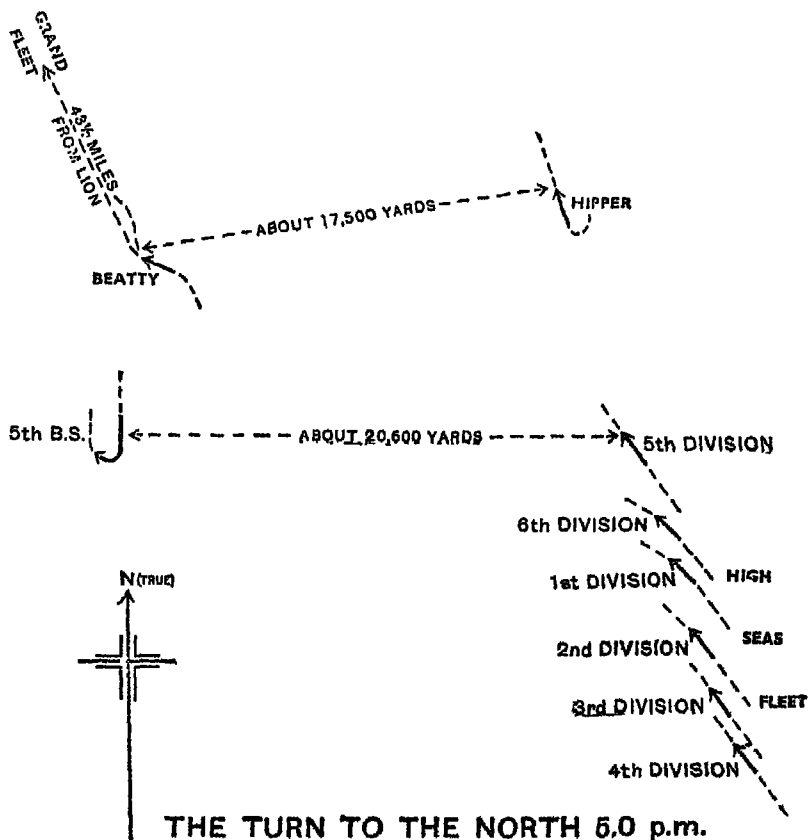
would, in less than an hour, have been decisive—if no other German forces had been at sea that day. The battle-cruisers continued to fire at one another with the utmost rapidity at varying ranges. But from 4.30 onward the approaching and increasing fire of the 5th Battle Squadron, and the development



by both sides of fierce destroyer attacks and counter-attacks, sensibly abated the intensity of their action.

Admiral Scheer, advancing with the whole High Sea Fleet, had received the news of the first contact between the light cruisers at 2.28 p.m., almost immediately after it had occurred. At 3.25 he learned of the presence of the British battle-cruisers. A message received at 3.45 from the 'Chief of Reconnaissance' showed that Admiral von Hipper was engaged with six enemy

battle-cruisers on a south-easterly course. Scheer understood clearly that Hipper was falling back upon him in the hopes of drawing the British battle-cruisers under the guns of the main German Fleet. He accordingly steered at first so as to take the pursuing British if possible between two fires. But when he heard a few minutes later that the *Queen Elizabeths* had also appeared upon the scene, he conceived it his duty to hasten directly to the support of his now outnumbered battle-cruisers. Leaving his older battleships to follow at their best pace, he therefore steamed



north in line at 17 knots shortly after four o'clock. The opposing forces were now approaching each other at 43 miles an hour.

The 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron, heralding Beatty's advance and guarding him from surprise, was the first to see the hostile fleet. At 4.33 the *Southampton*, carrying Commodore Goodenough's broad pennant, sighted the head of the long line of German battleships drawing out upon the horizon, and signalled the magic words 'Battleships in sight.' Almost as soon

as the reports of the light cruisers had reached the *Lion*, Beatty himself sighted the High Sea Fleet. He grasped the situation instantly. Without losing a moment he led his remaining four ships round in a complete turn, and steamed directly back along his course towards Jellicoe. Hipper, now in touch with Scheer, turned immediately afterwards in the same direction. The situation of the two Admirals was thus exactly reversed; Beatty tried to lead Hipper and the German battle fleet up to Jellicoe; Hipper pursued his retreating foe without knowing that he was momentarily approaching the British Grand Fleet. In this phase of the action, which is called 'The Run to the North,' firing was continued by the battle-cruisers on both sides. The light was now far more favourable to the British, and the German battle-cruisers suffered severely from their fire.

On sighting the main German Fleet, Beatty had turned about so swiftly that his ships soon passed the 5th Battle Squadron coming up at full speed and still on their southerly course. As the two squadrons ran past each other on opposite courses, the *Lion* signalled to the *Barham* to turn about in succession. The *Lion's* signal of recall was flown at 4.48. She passed the *Barham* two miles away, with this signal flying, at 4.53; and Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas responded to the signal three or four minutes later. Perhaps the Rear-Admiral, having been slow in coming into action, was inclined to be slow in coming out. Brief as was this interval, it was sufficient at the speed at which all the ships were moving to expose the 5th Battle Squadron to action with the van of the German Battle Fleet. The van was formed by the German 3rd Squadron, comprising the *Königs* and the *Kaisers*, the strongest and newest vessels in the German Navy. The four *Queen Elizabeths* were now subjected to tremendous fire concentrated particularly upon the point where each turned in succession. The two leading ships, the *Barham* and the *Valiant*, were engaged with the enemy's battle-cruisers; the rear ships, the *Warspite* and the *Malaya*, fought the whole of the finest squadron in the German Fleet. This apparently unequal conflict lasted for over half an hour. All the ships except the *Valiant* were struck repeatedly with the heaviest shells, the *Warspite* alone receiving thirteen hits and the *Malaya* seven. Such, however, was the strength of these vessels that none of their turrets were put out of action and their speed was wholly unaffected.

All the main forces were now fast drawing together, and all converged and arrived upon the scene in one great movement. Every ship was moving simultaneously, and after an almost unperceived interval, the duel of the battle-cruisers merged in the preliminaries of a general Fleet action.

## CHAPTER VI

### JUTLAND: THE ENCOUNTER

*'Courage and Conduct: Rooke and Toulouse!'*

[*Old Naval Ballad.*]

The Decisive and the Unknown—The Line of Battle—Jellicoe's System of Command—Admiral Scheer's Point of View—With the *Iron Duke*—Method of Deployment—Vital Information—Scouting Cruisers—The Meeting—Admiral Hood in Action—The *Defence* sunk—Need to Deploy the Fleet—Jellicoe's Decision—A Third Course—Neglect of the *Queen Elizabeths*—Progress of the Deployment—Destruction of the *Invincible*—Scheer turns away—The Second Opportunity—Scheer turns away again—Beatty renews the Action—Darkness falls—Scheer's Relief—Jellicoe's Problem—The Balance of Probability—The British Flotillas—The Admiralty's Decisive Message—Scheer's Escape—Nobody's Victory—The German Sortie of August 19—The Achievement of U-52—Some Conclusions—The Battle-cruiser Type—The Flash Danger—British and German Shell—Tactics—The Future.

UP to this moment we have been moving through events which, although terrific, were nevertheless within the region of previous experience. The battle-cruisers had fought each other before, and their Admirals knew the character of the conflict, the power of the weapons and what the ordeal was like. Moreover, as has been said, on neither side did the battle-cruiser force amount to a vital stake. But the Battle Fleets themselves are now approaching each other at a closing speed of over thirty-five miles an hour, and with every minute we enter the kingdom at once of the Decisive and of the Unknown.

The supreme moment on which all the thought and efforts of the British and German Admiralties had been for many years concentrated was now at hand. On both sides nearly the whole naval effort of the nation had been devoted to the Battle Fleets. In the British Navy, at any rate, the picture of the great sea battle had dominated every other thought, and its needs had received precedence over every other requirement. Everything had been lavished upon the drawing out of a line of batteries of such a preponderance and in such an order that the German Battle Fleet would be blasted and shattered *for certain* in a very short space of time. Numbers, gun power, quality, training—all had been provided for the Commander-in-Chief to the utmost extent possible to British manhood and science. Unless some entirely unforeseen



factor intervened or some incalculable accident occurred, there was no reason to doubt that thirty minutes' firing within ten thousand yards between two parallel lines of battle would achieve a complete victory.

Therefore for years Jellicoe's mind had been focussed upon the simplest form of naval battle: the single line and the parallel course; a long-range artillery conflict; and defensive action against torpedo attack. Everything beyond this opening phase was speculative and complicated. If the opening phase were satisfactory, everything else would probably follow from it. The Admiralty could not look beyond providing their Commander-in-Chief with an ample superiority in ships of every kind. The method and moment of joining battle and its tactical conduct could be ruled by him alone. It is now argued that it would have been better if, instead of riveting all attention and endeavour upon a long-range artillery duel by the two fleets in line on roughly parallel courses, the much more flexible system of engaging by divisions, of using the fastest battle-ships apart from the slower, and of dealing with each situation according to the needs of the moment, had been employed. It may well be so; and had there been several battles or even encounters between the British and German fleets in the war, there is no doubt that a far higher system of battle tactics would have developed. But nothing like this particular event had ever happened before, and nothing like it was ever to happen again. The 'Nelson touch' arose from years of fighting between the strongest ships of the time. Nelson's genius enabled him to measure truly the consequences of any decision. But that genius worked upon precise practical data. He had seen the same sort of thing happen on a less great scale many times over before the Battle of Trafalgar. Nelson did not have to worry about under-water damage. He felt he knew what would happen in a fleet action. Jellicoe did not know. Nobody knew. All he knew was that a complete victory would not improve decisively an already favourable naval situation, and that a total defeat would lose the war. He was prepared to accept battle on his own terms; he was not prepared to force one at a serious hazard. The battle was to be fought as he wished it or left unfought.

But while we may justify on broad grounds of national policy the general attitude of the Commander-in-Chief towards the conditions upon which alone a decisive battle should be fought, neither admiration nor agreement can adhere to the system of command and training which he had developed in the Fleet. Everything was centralized in the Flagship, and all initiative except in avoiding torpedo attack was denied to the leaders of squadrons and divisions. A ceaseless stream of signals from the

Flagship was therefore required to regulate the movement of the Fleet and the distribution of the fire. These signals prescribed the course and speed of every ship as well as every manœuvring turn. In exercises such a centralization may have produced a better drill. But in the smoke, confusion and uncertainty of battle the process was far too elaborate. The Fleet was too large to fight as a single organization or to be minutely directed by the finger of a single man. The Germans, following the Army system of command, had foreseen before the war that the intelligent co-operation of subordinates, who know thoroughly the general views and spirit of their chief, must be substituted in a fleet action for a rigid and centralized control. At this moment the line in which they were approaching was in fact three self-contained independently manœuvring squadrons following one another. But Jellicoe's system denied initiative not only to his battle squadrons, but even to the flotillas. Throughout the battle he endeavoured personally to direct the whole Fleet. He could, as his own account describes,<sup>1</sup> only see or know a small part of what was taking place; and as no human mind can receive more than a limited number of impressions in any given period of time, his control disappeared as a guiding power and only remained as a check on the enterprise of others.

Let us now take the position of Admiral Scheer. He had no intention of fighting a battle against the whole British Fleet. He was under no illusions about the relative strength of the rival batteries. Nothing could be more clownish than to draw up his fleet on parallel courses with an opponent firing twice his weight of metal and manned by a personnel whose science, seamanship and fortitude commanded his sincere respect. He had not come out with any idea of fighting a pitched battle. He had never intended to fight at a hopeless disadvantage. If he met weaker forces or equal forces, or any forces which gave a fair or sporting chance of victory, he would fight with all the martial skill and courage inseparable from the German name. But from the moment he knew that he was in the presence of the united Grand Fleet and saw the whole horizon bristling with its might, his only aim was to free himself as quickly as possible without dishonour from a fatal trap. In this he was entirely successful.

He had sedulously practised the turn-about movement by which under cover of torpedo attacks and smoke screens every ship in the line could circle about individually and steam in the opposite direction without fail even if the line was itself a curve or marred by the 'kinks' and disorder of heavy action. To this manœuvre and to its thorough comprehension by his captains the German Fleet was twice to owe its triumphant escape.

<sup>1</sup> *The Grand Fleet.*

Having regard to the moods and intentions of the two Commanders, to their respective strategic problems, to their geographical position, to their relative speeds and to the three hours' daylight that alone remained when they met, it will be seen that the chances of a general fleet action being fought out on May 31 were remote.

\* \* \* \* \*

The reader must now take his mental station on the bridge of the *Iron Duke* which all this time has been steaming forward leading the centre of the British Battle Fleet. Sir John Jellicoe has read every signal made by Admiral Beatty's light cruisers and battle-cruisers. He has therefore been able to follow on the chart the course of events from the first report of the suspicious vessels by the *Galatea* to the momentous announcement of Commodore Goodenough that the High Sea Fleet was in sight. The forces at his disposal are moving in a vast crescent. Its southern horn consists of Beatty's detached command, a fleet in itself. On the north or less-exposed flank is Admiral Hood with a force similar to, but smaller than Beatty's, and consisting of the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron with two light cruisers and destroyers. The immediate front of the Battle Fleet is screened by eight pre-Dreadnought armoured cruisers followed by four of the latest light cruisers (*Carolines*).

The Commander-in-Chief knows that all his powerful advanced scouting forces of the southern flank are engaged and that a heavy battle-cruiser action has been in progress for nearly two hours. From the first moment of the alarm he has been working his fleet up to its highest combined speed, and the whole of his twenty-four battleships<sup>1</sup> are now steaming at 20 knots. As soon as he heard that the German battle-cruisers were at sea, he had ordered Admiral Hood with the *Invincibles* and other vessels to reinforce Beatty. He finds time to telegraph to the Admiralty the solemn message, 'Fleet action imminent'; and far away around the indented coasts of Britain arsenals, dockyards, hospitals spring into a long-prepared intense activity.

The task is now the deployment of the Fleet. And here, while the armadas are closing, we must step aside for a few moments from the narrative to enable the lay reader to appreciate some of the technical issues involved.

The evolutions of cavalry in the days of shock tactics and those of a modern fleet resemble each other. Both approach in column and fight in line; and cavalry and fleet drill consist primarily in swift and well-executed changes from one formation to the other. The Grand Fleet was now advancing in a mass of six columns of four ships, each column a mile apart. The Fleet Flagship, the

<sup>1</sup> These with the four Queen Elizabeths made up his twenty-eight.

*Iron Duke*, led the fourth column from the right. Although the breadth of this array was over ten thousand yards, it was completely under the control of the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>1</sup> His ideal at the moment of contact would be to meet the enemy's fleet in front of him, and he could for this purpose use his power of changing direction within certain limits, exactly as a skilful rider sets his horse squarely at a fence. But though the mass formation is so handy for approach or manœuvre, it is, alike to a cavalry division or a great fleet, fatal to be caught in such order by an enemy who has already deployed into line.

Before the British Battle Fleet could fight, it must deploy into line. The nearer the Commander-in-Chief could bring his fleet to the enemy in mass, the more certain he would be of being able to lead it squarely in the right direction; but the longer he waited and the nearer he got before deploying, the greater his risk of being caught at a terrible disadvantage. It is a task, like the landing of an aeroplane, of choosing the right moment between two opposite sets of dangers. If the Commander-in-Chief has been skilful or lucky in guiding his mass of battleships in the true direction of the enemy's fleet and finds them exactly ahead of him, his deployment will be swift and easy. He has only to turn the leading ships of his columns to the right or to the left as the case may be, and the whole fleet in four minutes will draw up in one long line of battle, firing at its fullest strength. If, however, owing to facts beyond human control or judgment, he has not been able to point his mass in exactly the right direction, or if he is still uncertain as to the true position of the enemy he has an alternative method of deployment. He can make either of his flank columns steam onwards and the others follow in succession until the long single file which constitutes the line of battle is fully formed. This second method has the advantage of being much more likely to fit an unexpected situation. The moment the enemy appears out of the horizon the leading ship of either flank division can be ordered to take up any course which is in good relation to the hostile line, and all the other ships will follow it in succession. But whereas to deploy into line by the first method would take the British Grand Fleet of that day only four minutes, the deployment in the wake of one of the flank columns, or as it is called 'deployment on the wing,' requires twenty-two minutes before its full fire can be developed. Meanwhile the whole of the enemy's fleet might be in action with only such a portion of ours as had drawn out into line of battle.

To deploy correctly, accurate and instantaneous information of the position of the hostile fleet is all-important. For this

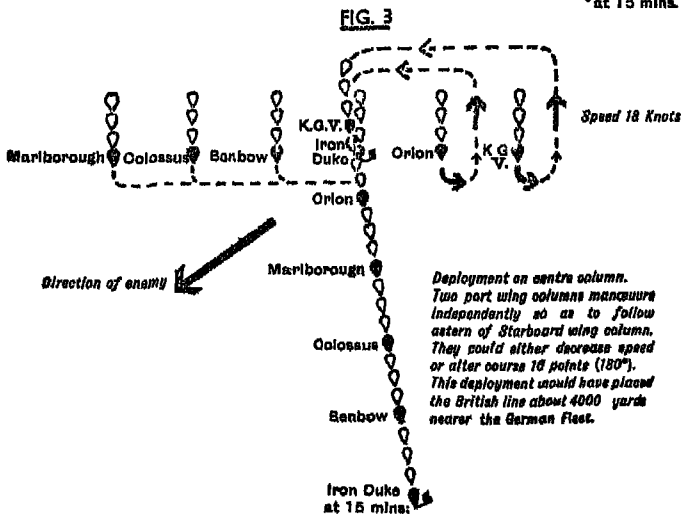
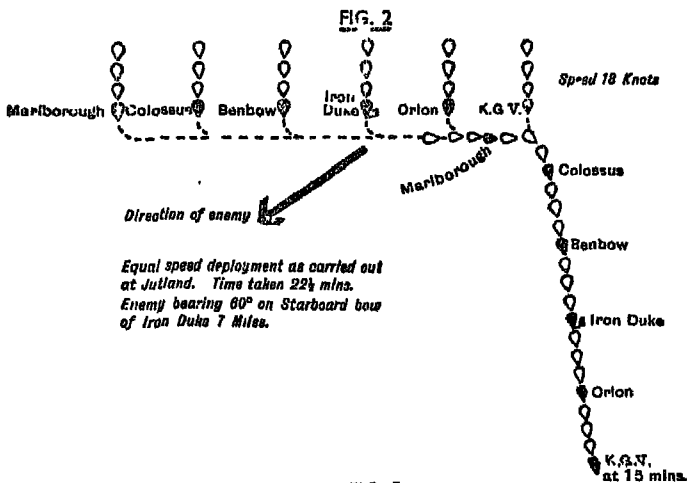
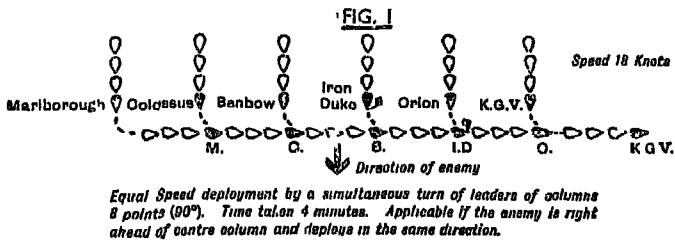
<sup>1</sup> The diagrams on page 1039 will show some of the many evolutions which are possible from this formation.

reason the Commander-in-Chief is protected by cruisers and light cruisers under his direct control, who strive to watch the enemy's fleet continuously and tell him every few minutes where it is going and how it is formed. In the quarter of an hour which precedes the moment of deployment these scouts, or several of them, ought to be both in sight of the enemy and of their own flagship. Out of intense complexities, intense simplicities emerge. Nothing ought to be trusted at such a crisis except direct visual signalling by searchlight flashes. This is almost like men speaking to each other. To trust in so cardinal a matter to the wireless reports of cruisers which are out of sight is to run a needless risk. Such reports are highly important and may sometimes disclose the exact situation. But if ever certainty is required, it is at the moment of fleet deployment; and certainty cannot be obtained from cruisers which are beyond the Commander-in-Chief's sight or not linked visually to vessels which he can see.

Both the Fleets and all the cruisers are moving fast and momentarily altering their whole relation to one another. The cruisers which are out of sight are very likely in heavy action, clinging on to the hostile fleet, zigzagging and turning suddenly to avoid gunfire or torpedo. They are sure to be out of their reckoning. Their reports have to be written, ciphered, dispatched, received, decoded before they reach the Commander-in-Chief. Ten minutes easily elapse in this process; and there are not ten minutes to spare. Moreover, the reports from different scouting ships may not agree. Three or four different versions may simultaneously reach the Commander-in-Chief, and not one of them will be absolutely accurate. Therefore the fateful act of deployment should invariably be founded upon the visual signal of a scout who is actually in sight of the enemy's fleet. The only sure method of knowing exactly where the hostile fleet is at the moment of deployment is the primitive plan of having light cruisers of your own which you can see and which can themselves see the enemy and each other. Such a network of lines of sight alone ensures exact knowledge of a vital matter.

The duty of clinging to the German High Sea Fleet and continually reporting its whereabouts by wireless which could be read simultaneously by Beatty and by Jellicoe belonged in the first instance to the light cruisers of Beatty's scouting force; and admirably did Commodore Goodenough and his squadron discharge it. There is no ground for criticizing the *Lion* for not transmitting signals from the light cruisers while in heavy action herself. The *Iron Duke* read simultaneously everything that passed by wireless. But signals from light cruisers sixty, fifty, forty or even thirty miles away proved to be conflicting and erroneous. We now know that Goodenough was four miles out

# DEPLOYMENT DIAGRAMS



of his reckoning, and the *Iron Duke* was more than six. Reports from any of Beatty's vessels, all of which were out of sight and beyond the horizon, were an invaluable means by which Jellicoe could learn the general course of events and approach of the enemy. But they were not, and ought never to have been relied on as a substitute for the reports of scouting cruisers of his own.

Nor was the Commander-in-Chief unprovided with the necessary vessels. Apart from the fourteen light cruisers detached with Beatty's advance force, Jellicoe had reserved for his own special use four of the very latest '*Caroline*' class of light cruiser. He had besides the eight armoured cruisers of the pre-Dreadnought era (*Defence*, *Warrior*, etc.). At the first alarm he had ordered these old vessels to increase to full speed and cover his front; but as they could not steam more than twenty knots and he was himself making eighteen and rising to twenty, they did not appreciably draw ahead of him in these important two hours. The *Carolines*, however, were designed for twenty-nine knots. Knowing that Beatty's force was committed to battle beyond the horizon, the Commander-in-Chief would have been prudent to use his four *Carolines* for the sole purpose of securing him early and exact information on which to base his deployment. His own battle orders declared that with less than 12 miles' visibility references to the enemy's latitude and longitude were quite useless, and emphasized the extreme importance of maintaining visual touch by means of linking cruisers.

In two hours the *Carolines* in a fan-shaped formation could have easily gained fifteen miles upon the *Iron Duke* in the general direction of the enemy. They would then have been in sight of the British armoured cruisers, which were themselves fully visible from the Grand Fleet. The *Carolines* themselves at this time could see at least seven miles. Thus the Commander-in-Chief could, had he so wished, have had more than twenty miles' accurate notice by visual signal of the position and line of advance of the German Fleet. This would have been an additional precaution to enable him to bring his fleet safely in mass formation to the exact position from which he could deploy on to the right course of battle by the four-minute method.

\* \* \* \* \*

All the ships in both the Fleets were in the half-hour preceding the British deployment drawing together into a tremendous concourse. In that period the following principal events were taking place for the most part simultaneously. Beatty's battle-cruisers, with the 5th Battle Squadron behind them, were hurrying northward to make contact with, and draw the enemy on to, the Grand Fleet. Hipper and Rear-Admiral Boedicker, with the

German 1st and 2nd Scouting Groups, were also running north, covering the advance of the German High Sea Fleet. Beatty and Hipper were engaging each other on roughly parallel courses, and the 5th Battle Squadron was in heavy action with the leading German battleships as well as with Hipper's battle-cruisers. Meanwhile Admiral Hood in the *Invincible* with the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron, and preceded by the light cruisers *Chester* and *Canterbury*, was advancing on the northern flank of the British array. Thus at about 5.40 both German Scouting Groups were plunging into the centre of the British crescent (it had now become a horseshoe), of which the southern horn (Beatty) was rapidly retiring and the northern horn (Hood) was rapidly advancing.

Hipper with the 1st Scouting Group was in renewed action to the south-west, when at 5.36 the *Chester*, reconnoitring for Admiral Hood, encountered the German 2nd Scouting Group. At 5.40 three of the four light cruisers of which it consisted emerged swiftly from the haze, and the *Chester* was 'almost immediately smothered in a hail of fire.'<sup>1</sup> Nearly all her guns were broken up, and her deck became a shambles. But the centre of the British crescent was also in rapid advance; and at 5.47 the *Defence* (Flagship of Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Arbuthnot) and the *Warrior*, the centre ships of the line of armoured cruisers directly covering the advance of the Grand Fleet, sighted the 2nd Scouting Group from the opposite direction and opened a heavy fire upon them. Boedicker's light cruisers, glad to pursue the stricken *Chester*, turned away from the fire of these powerful though middle-aged vessels, only to meet a far more formidable antagonist.

Admiral Hood with his three battle-cruisers, swinging round towards the cannonade, came rushing out of the mist, and at 5.55 fell upon the German light cruisers with his 12-inch guns, crippling the *Wiesbaden* and badly damaging the *Pillau* and the *Frankfort* in a few minutes. The apparition of capital ships to the northward 'fell on Admiral Boedicker like a thunderbolt.'<sup>2</sup> From far in his rear came the reverberation of Beatty's cruiser action. This new antagonist must be the head of the main British Fleet. Boedicker instantly turned to escape from the closing jaws, leaving the wounded *Wiesbaden* to crawl out of danger as fast as she could. The explosion of Hood's guns carried—as will be seen—a similar warning to Hipper.

Meanwhile Arbuthnot in the *Defence*, followed by the *Warrior*, was pursuing the 2nd Scouting Group. He found the *Wiesbaden* dragging herself away. Determined to destroy her, he 'came rushing down on her at full speed.'<sup>3</sup> The *Lion*, heading the British battle-cruisers again in action with Hipper, had also converged. Arbuthnot in impetuous ardour pressed across her bows,

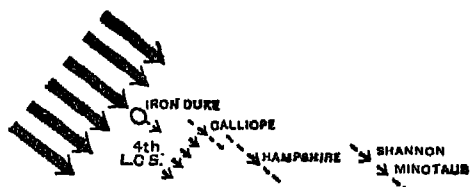
<sup>1</sup> Official Narrative, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

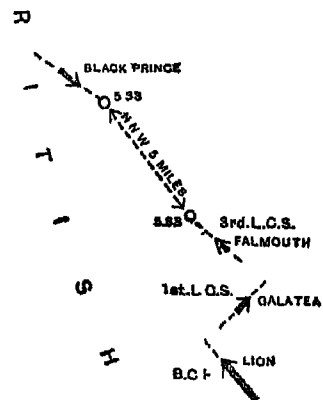


# THE MEETING 5.30 P.M.

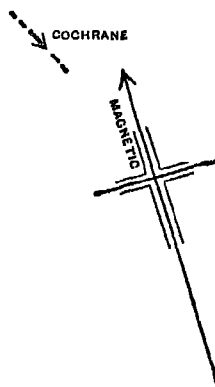


WARRIOR  
DEFENCE  
(SIR ROBERT ARBUTHNOT)

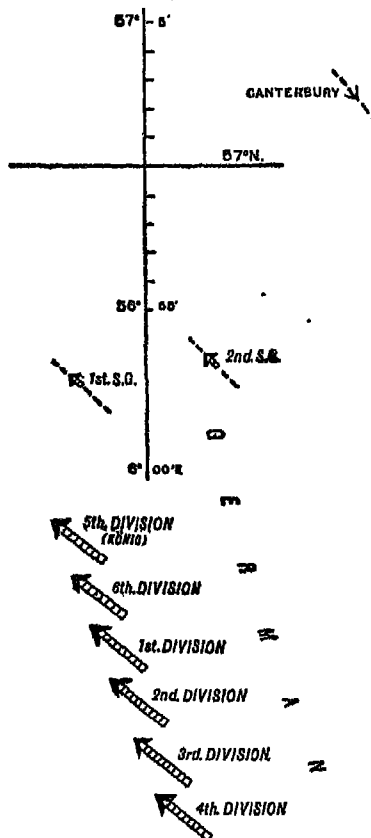
DUKE OF EDINBURGH



5th B.S. BARHAM  
2nd L.C.S. SOUTHAMPTON  
(ROOKEHOUGH)



8th B.O.S. (INVINCIBLE)  
CHESTER  
AD HODG



forcing her off her course, throwing out the fire of her squadron and blanketing their target with his funnel smoke. He was within 6,000 yards of the *Wiesbaden*, and had turned to starboard to bring his whole broadside to bear, when the again advancing *Hipper* swung his guns upon him, as did some of the German battleships now also coming into range. In a moment the *Defence*, struck by a succession of shells from the heaviest guns, blew up in a terrific explosion and at 6.19 p.m. vanished with nearly 800 men in a huge pillar of smoke. The *Warrior*, grievously smitten, seemed about to share her fate. But meanwhile greater events were happening. The Grand Fleet's deployment had begun at 6.15.

During these events the run to the north had come to an end. At 5.25 Beatty had resumed his action with *Hipper*. The light was now favourable to the British. The 15-inch guns of the *Barham* and the *Valiant* were also firing upon the German battle-cruisers, who began to suffer severely. In the midst of this, at 5.42, came the sound of the *Invincible's* guns attacking the 2nd Scouting Group to the north-eastward; and thereupon, having good reason to feel himself being surrounded by superior forces as well as being mastered in the actual fire-fight, *Hipper* turned his ships swiftly about and fell back on the High Sea Fleet. As his opponent turned away to starboard Beatty first conformed, then curled round him due east in the natural movement of the action, and also with the object of preventing *Hipper*, however he might turn, from discovering the British Battle Fleet. It was at this moment that the *Lion* came in sight of the *Iron Duke*. Her appearance was a surprise to Jellicoe. The reckoning from Beatty's wireless signals had led the *Iron Duke* to expect him a good deal farther to the eastward. The cumulative error of the two ships was no less than eleven miles. Fact now instantaneously superseded estimate. There was the *Lion* six miles away and nearly four points more to starboard of the *Iron Duke* than had been supposed. It was reasonable to assume that the enemy's Battle Fleet was also and to an equal degree more to the westward; and this meant that Jellicoe would not meet them ahead, or nearly ahead, but obliquely on the starboard bow.

The situation was critical, urgent and obscure. The Commander-in-Chief could feel the enemy's breath all round his right cheek and shoulder, and he now evidently wanted very much to point his fleet to the new direction. But this partial wheel<sup>1</sup> required fifteen minutes, and he had not got them. As soon as he saw Beatty steaming across his bows in action and at full speed, he flashed the question: 'Where is the enemy's Battle Fleet?'

<sup>1</sup> The sailors call it for short 'altering the bearing of the guides by (so many) points.'

(6.01). And a minute later, in consequence of Beatty's appearance and position, and not having time to wheel, he turned the leading ships of his divisions southward to improve his line of approach to the enemy by gaining ground in that direction. This movement lost no time and was absolutely right in conception, but it brought his fleet into an échelon formation of divisions which was not at all convenient for deployment, and the German fleet might be very near. At any minute it might emerge from the mist six or seven miles away, and forthwith open fire. And at 6.06 the Commander-in-Chief reverted to his previous formation, which though not pointing true still gave him the largest options for deployment.

Meanwhile Beatty, now only two miles ahead of the *Marlborough* (the right-hand corner vessel of the battleship mass), answered: 'Enemy's battle-cruisers bearing south-east.' On which the Commander-in-Chief repeated, 'Where is the enemy's Battle Fleet?' To this the *Lion* could give no answer. Hipper had for the moment vanished, and the *Lion* had no enemy in sight.

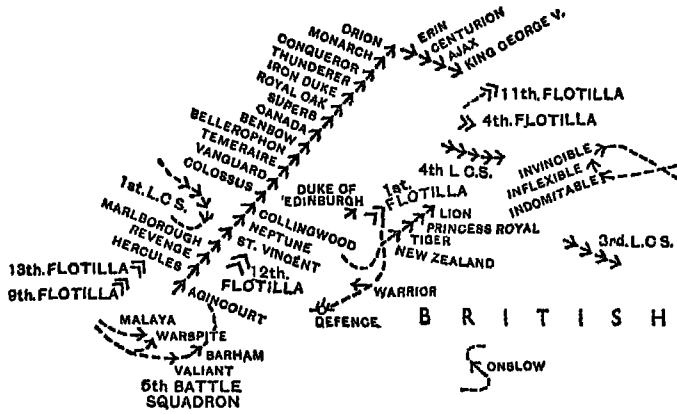
Anxiously peering at the menacing curtains of the horizon or poring over the contradictions and obscurities of the chart, Jellicoe held on his course in tense uncertainty for another eight minutes. Then at last came illumination. At 6.10 the *Barham* had sighted Scheer's battleships to the S.S.E., and as her wireless had been shot away, the *Valiant* passed the news. Jellicoe received it at 6.14. Almost simultaneously the *Lion* reported the High Sea Fleet in sight S.S.W. These two reports placed the enemy four points on the starboard bow or, in military parlance, half right. The direction was correct. But the leading German battleship *König* was placed three miles nearer than she actually was. On this view further delay seemed impossible. The moment of decision had come. 'It became,' says the Admiralty Narrative, 'urgently necessary to deploy the Fleet.'

The meeting having taken place at this unsatisfactory angle, a swift deployment of the Fleet by divisions to port or starboard was not open. It would have brought the Fleet into a line out of proper relation to the enemy's potential battle front. There remained only the twenty-two minutes' method of deployment on the wing. Jellicoe conceived himself limited to two alternatives: either he could let his right-hand column nearest the enemy go ahead and make the others follow it, or he could let his left-hand column farthest from the enemy take the lead. If he chose the former, he ran the risk of the enemy concentrating their fire on his leading ships while the rest of the Fleet could not reply. If he chose the latter, he drew out his line of battle 10,000 yards farther

<sup>1</sup> Their course was omitted.

# THE DEPLOYMENT

6.19 P.M.



WEISSBADEN (DISABLED)

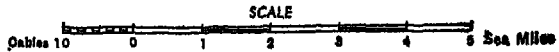
101878



G E R M A N

POSEN  
RHEINLAND  
NASSAU  
WESTFALEN

2nd SQUADRON 4th S.G. 5th & 7th FLOTILLAS  
FOLLOWING WESTFALEN SOME DISTANCE ASTERN



away from the enemy. Instead of deploying into action and opening fire at once, he would deploy outside effective gun range ; and his opening movement in the battle would be a retirement.

Our present knowledge leads to the conclusion that he could have deployed on the starboard wing without misadventure. The 5th Battle Squadron, with its unequalled guns, armour and speed, was in fact about to take the van ahead of the *Marlborough's* division of older Dreadnoughts. Beatty's battle-cruisers were already ahead steaming upon the exact course. Still farther ahead in front of all Hood in lively comprehension was about to wheel into the line. The whole Fleet would have drawn out harmoniously into full battle at decisive ranges, with all its fast heavy ships at the right end of the line for cutting the enemy from his base. The Commander-in-Chief chose the safer course. No one can say that on the facts as known to him at the moment it was a wrong decision. There are ample arguments on either side, and anyhow he was the man appointed to choose. If he had deployed on the wing towards the enemy, and if the leading British squadrons had been overwhelmed by the fire of the German Battle Fleet, or if a heavy torpedo attack had developed on the van of the Fleet and if our whole line had thereby been checked and disordered in its deployment, and four or five ships sunk (as might have happened in as many minutes), there would have been no lack of criticism upon the imprudence of the Admiral's decision. And criticism would have been the least of the consequences.

But there was surely a third course open to Sir John Jellicoe which had none of the disadvantages of these hard alternatives.<sup>1</sup> Although it involved a complicated evolution, it was in principle a very simple course. In fact it was the simplest and most primitive of all courses. He could have deployed on his centre and taken the lead himself. There is a very old and well-known signal in the Royal Navy which would have enabled the Commander-in-Chief to lead his own division out of the mass and make the others follow after him in any sequence he might choose. It was only necessary to hoist the pennant 'A' above a succession of numerals indicating the order in which the various divisions should follow. It involved every ship in the two port divisions either reducing speed or making a complete left-handed circle to avoid losing speed, while the starboard divisions were taking their places behind the Commander-in-Chief. But the Fleet was not under fire, and the manoeuvre was practical. It meant in short, 'Follow me.' Out of a tangle of uncertainties and out of a cruel dilemma here was a sure, prudent and glorious middle course. By adopting it Sir John Jellicoe would have retained the greatest measure of control over his Fleet after deployment. He would have had three miles and ten

<sup>1</sup> See diagram on p. 1039.

minutes more to spare than if he had deployed on the wing towards the enemy. He would have avoided any retirement from the advancing foe. He would have led his Fleet, and they would have followed him.

It may seem strange that he should have never attempted to deal with this alternative in any of his accounts and explanations of his actions. It is perhaps easily explained. Sir John Jellicoe was working on a definite preconceived system. In the thunder and mystery of the preliminaries of what might be the greatest sea battle of the world, he held as long as he could rigidly to his rules. All his dispositions for battle had contemplated a deployment either on the port or starboard column of battleships. As a consequence the routine system of signals in the Grand Fleet battle orders did not contemplate any such deployment on the Admiral's flag. The old signal was well known. If hoisted, it would have been instantly comprehended. But it had fallen into desuetude, and it never seems to have occurred to the Commander-in-Chief at the time.

Equally it did not occur to him to take an obvious precaution against the escape of the enemy which could not have risked the safety of his Fleet. His cautious deployment on the outer wing made it the more imperative to make sure the enemy was brought to battle. To do this he had only to tell the four *Queen Elizabeths* of the 5th Battle Squadron, instead of falling tamely in at the tail of the line and thus wasting all their unique combination of speed and power, to attack separately the disengaged side of the enemy. These ships would not have been in any danger of being overwhelmed by the numbers of the enemy. They were eight or nine knots faster than Scheer's Fleet as long as it remained united. They could at any moment, if too hard pressed, break off the action. Thus assured, what could be easier than for them to swoop round upon the old *Deutschland* squadron and cripple or destroy two or three of these ships in a few minutes? It would have been almost obligatory for Scheer to stop and rescue them; and taken between two fires, he would have been irrevocably committed to battle. This was exactly the kind of situation for which the division of fast super-Dreadnoughts, combining speed, guns and armour in an equal degree, had been constructed at such huge expense and trouble as one of the main acts of my administration of the Admiralty. But neither the Commander-in-Chief nor their own Admiral could think of any better use for them than to let them steam uselessly along in rear of the Fleet at seventeen knots, their own speed being over twenty-four.

Therefore at 6.15 p.m. precisely the order was given by signal and wireless to deploy on the port wing. The fateful flags fluttered in the breeze, and were hauled down. The order became opera-

tive, and five-sixths of the immense line of British battleships turned away and began to increase their distance from the enemy. The first move of the Battle Fleet at Jutland had been made.

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Both Beatty and the 5th Battle Squadron had been conveniently placed for a deployment on the starboard wing. The deployment to port forced Beatty to steam at full speed across the front of the line of battle in order to take his position in the van. Hood wheeled into the line ahead of Beatty. The smoke of the battle-cruisers obscured the vision of the battleships, and at 6.26 Jellicoe reduced the Fleet speed to fourteen knots in order to let the battle-cruisers draw ahead. The signal did not get through quickly, and bunching and overlapping began to occur, particularly at the turning-point. The 5th Battle Squadron, too far behind to cross the front of Jellicoe's deployment and receiving no orders to act independently, decided to take station in rear, and executed a left-handed turn under the concentrated fire both of the German battle-cruisers and the leading German battleships. Once more the 15-inch guns and 13-inch armour of the fast battleships came into heavy action against greatly superior forces, and ponderous blows were given and received. The *Warspite*, with her helm temporarily jammed, fell out of the squadron and made a sweeping circle out of control and under intense fire. The circle carried her round the half-wrecked *Warrior*, who in the confusion, blessing her saviour's involuntary chivalry, struggled into safety.

At 6.25, while the deployment was proceeding, the Fleet began to fire, about one-third of the ships finding targets either on the unfortunate *Wiesbaden*, which lay between the lines a flaming wreck, or on the German 3rd Squadron (*Königs*) at the head of the hostile fleet. The range was fouled by smoke, and the visibility poor. But Jellicoe's manœuvre had procured the most favourable light for the British, and only the flashes of their guns could be seen by the enemy. When half the Fleet had turned the corner, Jellicoe seems to have thought of coming to closer quarters by altering course by sub-divisions towards the enemy. The L-shape in which the Fleet was then formed probably made him feel that this movement was impracticable, and the signal was cancelled before it was begun. Half the British Fleet was firing by the time the deployment was completed (6.47 p.m.); and the German 3rd Squadron was repeatedly hit, no British battleship being touched in return.

Meanwhile Hood with the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron had been engaging Hipper's battle-cruisers with good effect. But at 6.31 a salvo from the *Derfflinger* smote the *Invincible*. In the words of the Official Narrative,

'Several big explosions took place in rapid succession ; masses of coal dust issued from the riven hull ; great tongues of flame played over the ship ; the masts collapsed ; the ship broke in two, and an enormous pall of black smoke ascended to the sky. As it cleared away the bow and stern could be seen standing up out of the water as if to mark the place where an Admiral lay.'<sup>1</sup> Of her crew of 1,026 officers and men, six only survived.

We will now follow for a moment the German movements. Scheer found himself under fire from the British line of battle from 6.25 onwards. He mistook Hood's battle-cruisers for the van of the British line. He thus thought himself about to be enveloped. Instead of executing upon the British the manœuvre of 'crossing the T,' it seemed that they were about to do this to him. He therefore at 6.35, with the utmost promptitude, turned his whole Fleet about, every ship turning simultaneously, and made off to the westward, *towards England*, launching at the same time a flotilla to cover his retirement by a torpedo attack and smoke screens. This thoroughly practised evolution was performed with success and even precision, in spite of the pressure and disarray of battle. The fleets fell rapidly apart, the Germans faded into a bank of mist, and Scheer found himself alone again.

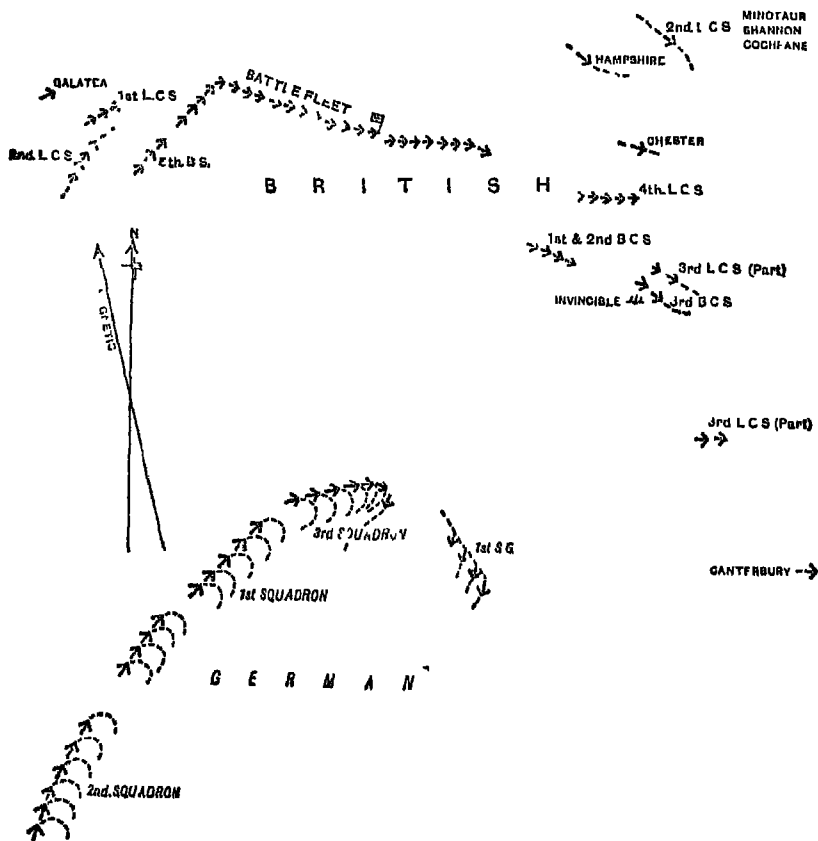
But now ensued one of those astounding events utterly outside the bounds of reasonable expectation, which have often been the turning-points of history. No sooner did Scheer, after steaming for about twenty minutes to the westward, find himself free, than he turned each ship about right-handed and again steamed eastward. What was his purpose? After getting back to harbour he declared that it was to seek further conflict with the British Fleet. 'When I noticed that the British pressure had quite ceased and that the fleet remained intact in my hands, I turned back under the impression that the action could not end in this way, and that I ought to seek contact with the enemy again.'<sup>2</sup> This explanation is endorsed by the German official history. Nevertheless it seems more likely that he calculated that this movement would carry him across the British rear, and that he hoped to pass astern punishing the rear ships and getting again on the homeward side of the battle. We know that he was under the impression that the British battle-cruisers were the van of the British line of battle. From this the conclusion inevitably presented to his mind would be that the British Battle Fleet was five miles ahead of its position. On these assumptions his movement would have carried him very nicely across the British tail. Instead of this he ran right into the centre of the whole British fleet, which was certainly the last thing

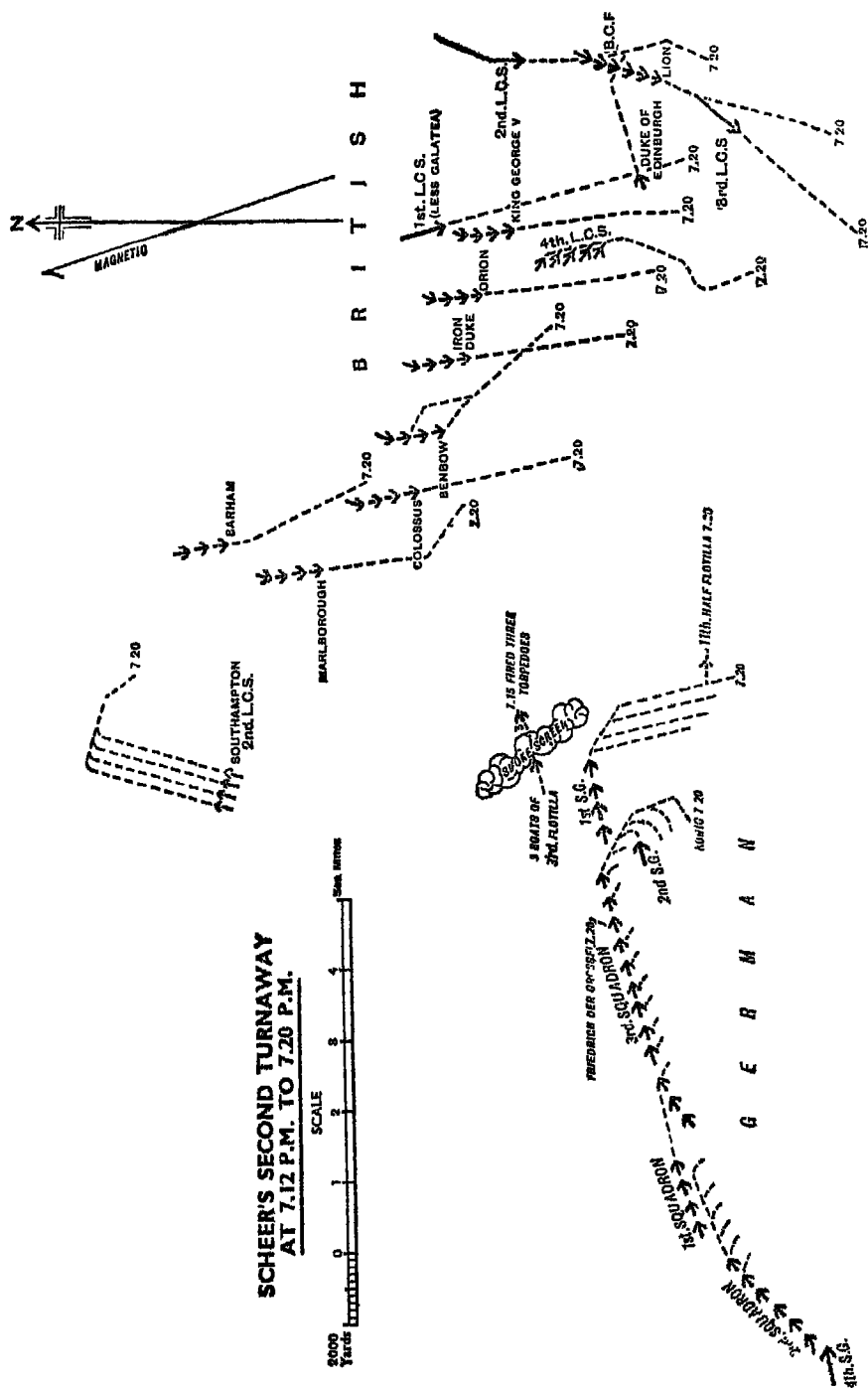
<sup>1</sup> pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Official Narrative.



### SCHEER'S FIRST TURNAWAY 6.35 P.M.





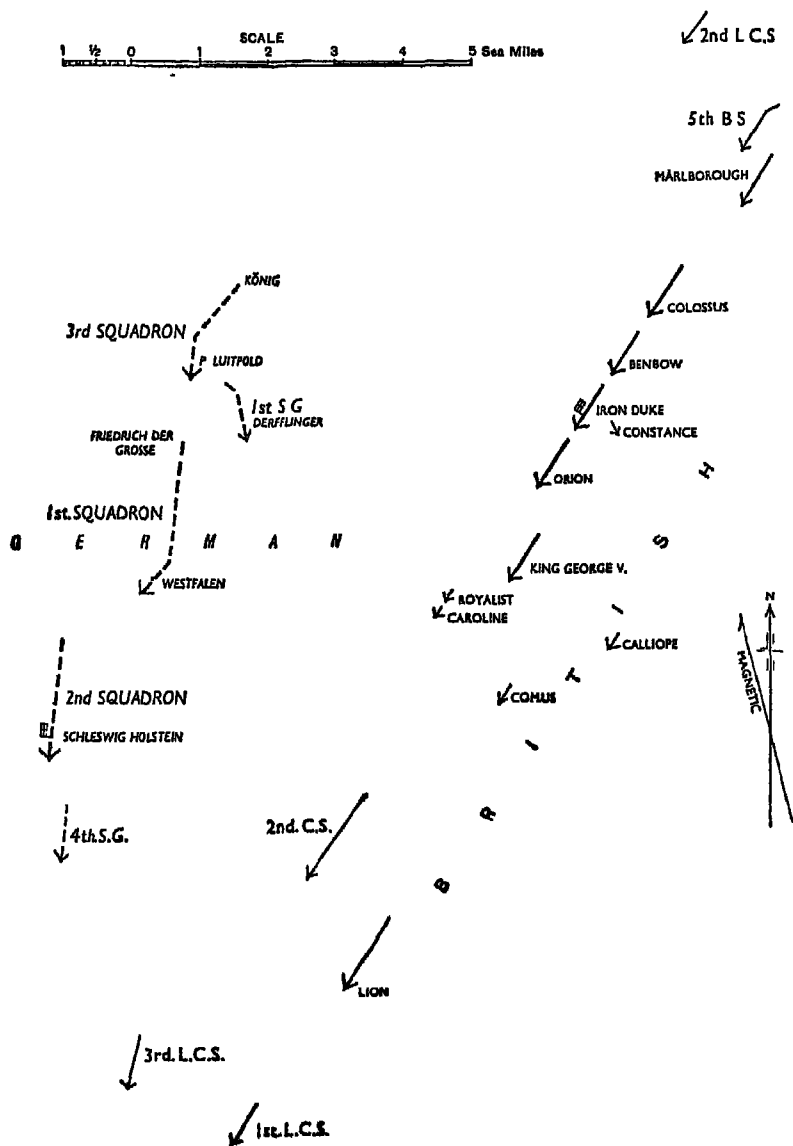
he sought. This mistake might well have been fatal to the Germans. It would have been impossible to have chosen a situation of greater peril. Jellicoe's fleet was also no doubt somewhat inconveniently arranged. He was steaming south with his divisions in échelon. In fact he now, at 7.12 p.m., was caught by the Germans while he was in the very posture he had so disliked before his original deployment. But nevertheless in practice no serious difficulty arose. As the German ships one after another emerged from the mist, all the British battleships whose range was clear opened a terrific fire upon them. The German van, the formidable *Königs*, saw the whole horizon as far as eye could reach alive with flashes. About six minutes' intense firing ensued. The concussion of the shell storm burst upon the German vessels. Hipper's long-battered but redoubtable scouting group once more bore the brunt. The *Seydlitz* burst into flames; the *Lützow* reeled out of the line. This was the heaviest cannonade ever fired at sea.

It did not last long. The moment Scheer realized what he had run into, he repeated—though less coolly—the manœuvre he had used at 6.35; and at 7.17 he again turned the battlefleet about to the westward, launched another series of flotilla attacks, threw up more smoke screens, ordered the gasping battle-cruisers to attack at all costs to cover his retreat (a 'Death ride'), and sped again to the west. Jellicoe, obedient to his long-resolved policy, turned away from the torpedo stream, first two points and then two points more. Here at any rate was a moment when, as a glance at the map will show, it would have been quite easy to divide the British Fleet with the 5th Battle Squadron leading the starboard division, and so take the enemy between two fires. But the British Commander-in-Chief was absorbed in avoiding the torpedo attack by turning away. The range opened, the Fleets separated, and Scheer vanished again from Jellicoe's view—this time for ever.

Between 6.0 and 7.30 the German flotillas had delivered no fewer than seven attacks upon the British Battle Fleet. The true answer to these attacks was the counter-attack of the British flotillas and Light Cruiser Squadrons, of which latter two were available and close at hand. These should have been ordered to advance and break up the enemy's torpedo craft, as they were fully capable of doing. Instead of using this aggressive parry, Jellicoe turned his battleships away on each occasion; and contact with the enemy ceased. The German flotillas in the whole of this phase lost only a single boat, but they effectively secured the safe withdrawal of their Fleet from the jaws of death.

Beatty however still sought to renew the action. It was above all things important to drive the Germans westward away from

# DARKNESS FALLS AT 9.00 P.M.

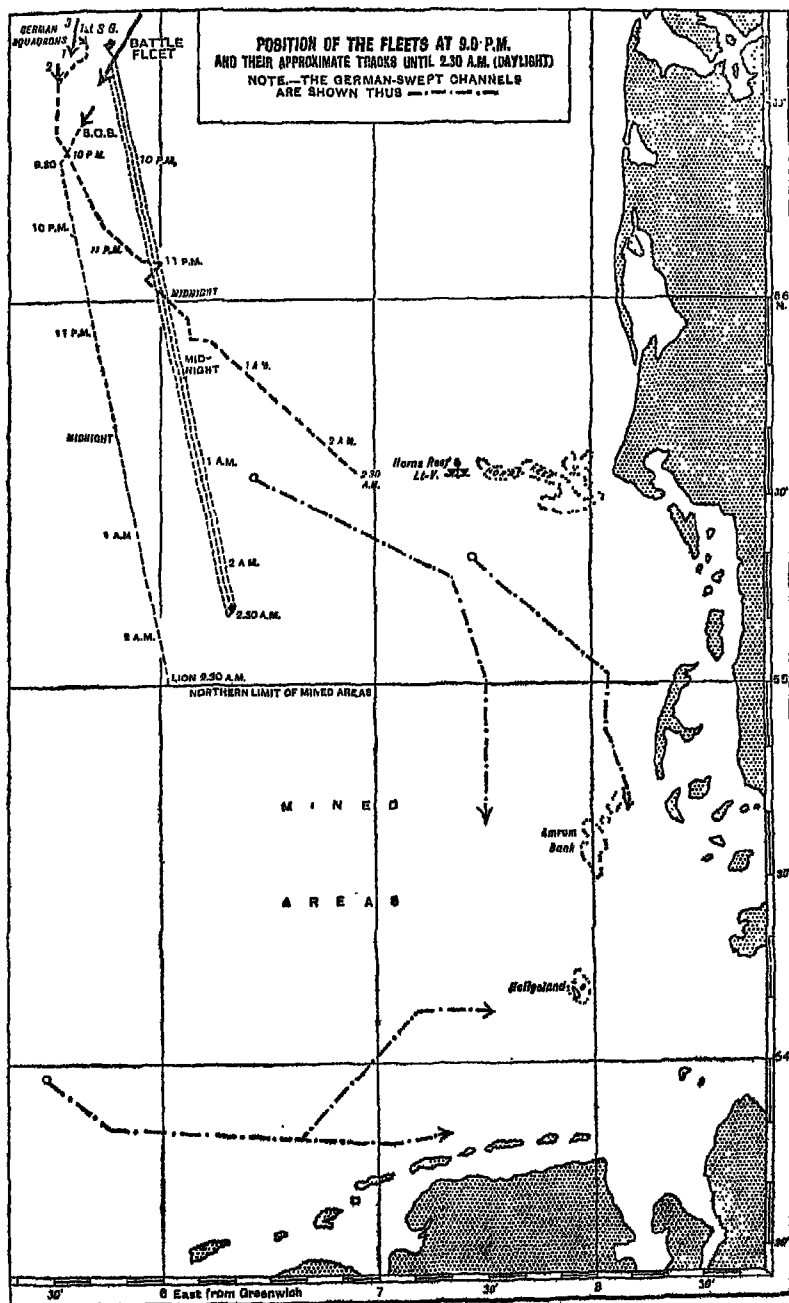


home. The *Lion* was in sight of the enemy; but the British Battle Fleet was drawing no nearer to her, and it was not possible for the battle-cruisers to engage Scheer single-handed. At 7.45 he signalled the bearing of the enemy through the *Minotaur* to the leading British battleship; and at 7.47 sent the much-discussed message to the Commander-in-Chief, 'Submit that the van of the battleships follow me; we can then cut off the enemy's fleet.' Almost immediately thereafter he altered course to close the enemy. Meanwhile Scheer homeward bent had gradually brought the High Sea Fleet from a westerly on to a southerly course. The fleets were once again converging. Light cruisers and destroyers on both sides began to fire. The British battle-cruisers would soon be engaged. Where was the van of our Battle Fleet? A quarter of an hour was allowed to pass after Jellicoe received Beatty's signal before he sent the necessary order—and that in no urgent terms—to the 2nd Battle Squadron. Vice-Admiral Jerram commanding that squadron did not increase his speed, did not draw ahead of the main fleet, and did not ask the *Minotaur* for the *Lion's* position. He merely held on his course, in much uncertainty of the general situation. Thus the *Lion* and her consorts were alone in the last as in the first encounter of great ships at Jutland and in the war. The German battle-cruisers, grievously wounded, were scarcely in a condition to fight, and the light was still favourable to the British. Firing began from the *Tiger* on different ships at ranges from 9,000 to 13,000 yards. One of the two remaining turrets of the *Derfflinger* was put out of action. The *Seydlitz* and *Lützow* could scarcely fire a shot. Suddenly the old Deutschland battleships came to the rescue of Hipper's gallant battered vessels; and the last salvos of the big guns were exchanged with them in the twilight. After 15 minutes the Germans turned off again to the westward and disappeared in the gathering gloom.

\* \* \* \* \*

Night had now come on, and by nine o'clock darkness had fallen on the sea. Thereupon the conditions of naval warfare underwent profound changes. The rights of the stronger fleet faded into a grey equality. The far-ranging cruisers were blinded. The friendly destroyers became a danger to the ships they guarded. The great guns lost their range. Now, if ever, the reign of the torpedo would begin. The rival Navies, no more than six miles apart, steamed onwards through the darkness, silent and invisible, able to turn about in five minutes or less in any direction, no man knowing what the other would do or what might happen next.

But Admiral Scheer had made up his mind, and his course, though perilous, was plain. He was a man of resolution based on



reasoned judgment. He knew that a superior hostile fleet lay between him and home. To be found in that position by the light of another day meant, in all probability, total destruction. The night was short. At half-past two dawn would be breaking. He must act without a moment's delay. His plan was simple: to go home as fast as possible by the shortest route, at all risks and at all costs. If he found the British Fleet in his path, he would crash through it. Many ships would be sunk on both sides, but the bulk of the German Navy would escape to harbour. Anything was better than being caught at sea by an overwhelming force with eighteen hours of battle light before it. At 9.14 he issued the following order by wireless: 'Our own main body is to proceed in. Maintain course S.S.E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E.; speed 16 knots.' Accordingly the High Seas Fleet turned from its southerly course, and preceded by its flotillas and light cruiser squadrons, steamed at its fastest united speed straight for the Horn Reef. No one can doubt that he acted rightly.

Sir John Jellicoe's problem was more complicated. He now had the enemy in a position which certainly was no part of any prearranged German plan. He rightly rejected the idea of a night action. Any battle brought on at daybreak would be free from all apprehensions of traps or elaborately prepared ambushades. It would be a straightforward fight to a finish in blue water; and he was more than twice as strong. His obvious and supreme duty was to compel such a battle. But how?

Two minefields had been laid in the Heligoland Bight since the beginning of the war by the Germans to impede an attack by the British Fleet. The Germans had been aided in this task, for reasons requiring more explanation, by the British Admiralty; and in consequence of the exertions of both sides large parts of the Bight were closed by British and German mines. Through these the Germans had swept three broad channels: one to the north by the Horn Reef, one rather more in the centre by Heligoland, and one to the south by the Ems River. Both sides knew a great deal about each other's minefields. They were marked on their charts as clearly as rocks or shoals, and could be avoided with almost equal certainty. But the British Admiralty knew not only the minefields, but all the three German channels through them. Sir John Jellicoe therefore had on his chart all the three passages open to Admiral Scheer marked out before him.

There was also a fourth alternative. Scheer might avoid the Heligoland Bight altogether, and turning northward as soon as darkness fell, steer homewards through the Kattegat and into the Baltic. Which of these four would he choose? No one in the position of the British Commander-in-Chief could expect to achieve certainty. Whatever decision Jellicoe had taken must

have left a number of chances unguarded. All that could be expected of him was to act in accordance with reasonable probability, and leave the rest to Fate. The final question which this chapter must examine is whether he acted upon reasonable probability or not.

It was possible immediately to eliminate the least likely alternatives open to the enemy. Retreat into the Baltic by the Kattegat gave Schcer no security against being brought to battle in daylight. It involved a voyage of nearly 350 miles, giving the faster British a long day to chase in the open sea. Jellicoe could have provided for this route by the simple process (which he did not however adopt) of sending a few light cruisers to watch the area, and thus ensure timely information at dawn. The Ems route, which was long and roundabout, might also have been dismissed as improbable. Thus the four alternatives could have been reduced to two, i.e. the Horn Reef channel and the Heligoland channel; and these two were not far apart. Sir John Jellicoe would have been justified in considering both the Horn Reef and Heligoland channels as open and likely. On this dual basis however a good movement presented itself. By steering for a point about ten miles to the south-westward of the Horn Reef light he would have been at daybreak in a favourable position to bring Scheer to battle whether he made for the Horn Reef or Heligoland channel. The British Fleet was at least three knots faster than the Germans and was nearer this point when darkness fell.

But Jellicoe seems to have formed the opinion that the alternative lay between the Heligoland channel and the Ems, and he nowhere mentions the possibility of the Horn Reef which was *prima facie* the most likely. 'I was loth,' he says,<sup>1</sup> 'to forgo the advantage of position, which would have resulted from an easterly or westerly course,'<sup>2</sup> and I therefore decided to steer to the southward, where I should be in a position to renew the engagement at daylight, and should also be favourably placed to intercept the enemy should he make for his base by steering for Heligoland or towards the Ems and thence along the north German coast.' This was hardly the most reasonable assumption, and did not gather, but on the contrary excluded, the major favourable chances. To continue on such a course until dawn broke at 2.30 a.m. would carry the British Fleet 43 miles to the south-westward of Horn Reef and 25 miles to the westward of Scheer's direct course to Heligoland, thus failing to procure action in either case. Scheer was left free to retreat by the Horn Reef, Heligoland, or, if he chose, the Kattegat; and only the much less likely route by the Ems was barred.

<sup>1</sup> Commander-in-Chief's Despatches, Jutland Papers, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. by his taking an easterly or westerly course.



At 9.1 p.m. the British Battle Fleet turned by divisions and proceeded almost due south at a speed of seventeen knots. At 9.17 p.m. it had assumed its night organization of three columns in close array, and at 9.27 p.m. the destroyer flotillas were told to take station 5 miles astern. This order served a double purpose. It freed the Battle Fleet during the darkness from the proximity of its own flotillas, and thus enabled it to treat all torpedo craft as foes and sink at sight any that appeared. It also prolonged the British line and thereby increased the chances of intercepting the enemy. No orders to attack the enemy were however given to the flotillas, and they therefore steamed passively along their course without instructions or information. Jellicoe's signal to his flotillas was picked up by the German listening station at Neumünster, which reported to Scheer at 10.10 p.m., 'Destroyers have taken up position five sea miles astern of enemy's main fleet.' At about 10.50 p.m. the German 7th Flotilla reported that it had sighted British destroyers. Thus the German Admiral, if the Neumünster message reached him, had from this time forward a fairly clear idea of the relative positions of the two fleets.<sup>1</sup> Here ends the first phase of the night operations. The British Fleet is steaming southward at seventeen knots, and opening to the enemy every moment his two nearest and most likely lines of retreat. The Germans are making for the Horn Reef at sixteen knots, and are about to cut across Jellicoe's tail against which their destroyers have already brushed. There is still time to retrieve the situation.

At about 10.30 p.m. the 4th German Scouting Group came in contact with the British 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron which was following our Battle Fleet. There was a violent explosion of firing. The *Southampton* and the *Dublin* suffered heavy losses, and the old German cruiser *Frauenlob* was sunk by a torpedo. The gun flashes and searchlights of this encounter were noted in the log of nearly every vessel in the Grand Fleet. Firing in this quarter, though it was no proof, at least suggested that the enemy was seeking to pass astern of the British Fleet on the way to the Horn Reef. But confirmation of a decisive character was at hand.

Far away in Whitehall the Admiralty have been listening to the German wireless. They have heard and deciphered Admiral Scheer's order of 9.14 p.m. to the High Sea Fleet. At 10.41 the *Iron Duke*, and at about 11.30, after it had been decoded, Sir John Jellicoe, received the following electrifying message: 'German Battle Fleet ordered home at 9.14 p.m. Battle-cruisers in rear. Course S.S.E.  $\frac{3}{4}$  east. Speed 16 knots.'<sup>2</sup> If this message was to be trusted, it meant, and could only mean, that the Germans

<sup>1</sup> It is now said that he did not receive it till he got back to harbour.

<sup>2</sup> Official Narrative, p. 72.

were returning by the Horn Reef. Taken in conjunction first with the general probabilities and secondly with the firing heard astern, the Admiralty message, unless wholly erroneous, amounted almost to certainty. Had Jellicoe decided to act upon it, he had only to turn his fleet on to a course parallel to the Germans in order to make sure of bringing them to battle at daybreak. By so doing he would neither have risked a night action nor increased the existing dangers of torpedo attack.

But could the Admiralty message be trusted? Sir John Jellicoe thought not. He no doubt remembered that earlier in the day, a few minutes before the enemy's battle-cruisers were sighted, the same authoritative information had told him that the German High Sea Fleet was probably not at sea as its flagship was speaking from harbour. When Scheer's course as given by the Admiralty was plotted on the *Iron Duke's* chart, it appeared, owing to a minor error, to bring the Germans into almost exactly the position occupied by his own flagship at that moment. This was absurd. Moreover, he had received a report from the *Southampton* timed 10.15 which suggested that the enemy was still to the westward. Generally he considered the position was not clear. He therefore rejected the Admiralty information and continued to steam southward at seventeen knots.

It is difficult to feel that this decision was not contrary to the main weight of the evidence. Certain it is that if Sir John Jellicoe had acted in accordance with the Admiralty message, he would have had—even if that message had proved erroneous—a justification for his action which could never have been impugned. He was leaving so many favourable chances behind him as he sped to the south, and guarding against so few, that it is difficult to penetrate his mind. Full weight must, however, be assigned to the elements of doubt and contradiction which have been described.

At 11.30 the High Sea Fleet, after some minor alterations in course, crashed into the 4th British Flotilla, and a fierce brief conflict followed. The destroyers *Tipperary* and *Broke* were disabled. The *Spitfire* collided with the battleship *Nassau*, and the *Sparrowhawk* collided with the injured *Broke*. The German cruiser *Elbing* was rammed and disabled by the *Posen*. The *Rostock* was torpedoed. The rest of the British flotilla made off into the night, and turning again on their course, ran a second time into the enemy, when the destroyers *Fortune* and *Ardent* were both sunk by gunfire. A little after midnight the armoured cruiser *Black Prince*, which had become detached from the Fleet and was endeavouring to rejoin, found herself within 1,600 yards of the German super-Dreadnought Squadron, and was instantly blown to pieces; and her crew of 750 men perished without

survivors. At 12.25 the head of the German line, which was by now on the port quarter of the British Fleet, cut into the 9th, 10th and 13th British Flotillas and sank the destroyer *Turbulent*. In these unexpected clashes the British flotillas following dutifully in the wake of the Grand Fleet suffered as severely as if they had been launched in an actual attack. The last contact was 2.10, when the 12th Flotilla sighting the enemy who had now worked right round to port, and led by Captain Stirling with an aggressive intention and definite plan of attack, destroyed the *Pommern* with her entire crew of 700 men, and sank the German destroyer V 4. This was the end of the fighting.

Up till half an hour after midnight there was still time for Jellicoe to reach the Horn Reef in time for a daylight battle. Even after that hour the German rear and stragglers could have been cut off. The repeated bursts of heavy firing, the flash of great explosions, the beams of searchlights—all taking place in succession from west to east—was not readily capable of more than one interpretation. But the Grand Fleet continued steadily on its course to the south; and when it turned northward at 2.30 a.m. the Germans were for ever beyond its reach. The Northern course also carried the British Fleet away from the retreating enemy; and it is clear that from this time onward the Commander-in-Chief had definitely abandoned all expectation of renewing the action. It remained only to collect all forces, to sweep the battle area on the chance of stragglers, and to return to harbour. This was accordingly done.

So ended the Battle of Jutland. The Germans loudly proclaimed a victory. There was no victory for anyone; but they had good reason to be content with their young Navy. It had fought skilfully and well. It had made its escape from the grip of overwhelming forces, and in so doing had inflicted heavier loss in ships and men than it had itself received. The British Battle Fleet was never seriously in action. Only one ship, the *Colossus*, was struck by an enemy shell, and out of more than 20,000 men in the battle ships only two were killed and five wounded. To this supreme instrument had been devoted the best of all that Britain could give for many years. It was vastly superior to its opponent in numbers, tonnage, speed, and above all gun power, and was at least its equal in discipline, individual skill and courage. The disappointment of all ranks was deep; and immediately there arose reproaches and recriminations, continued to this day, through which this account has sought to steer a faithful and impartial passage. All hoped that another opportunity would be granted them, and eagerly sought to profit by the lessons of the battle. The chance of an annihilating victory had been perhaps offered at the moment of deployment,

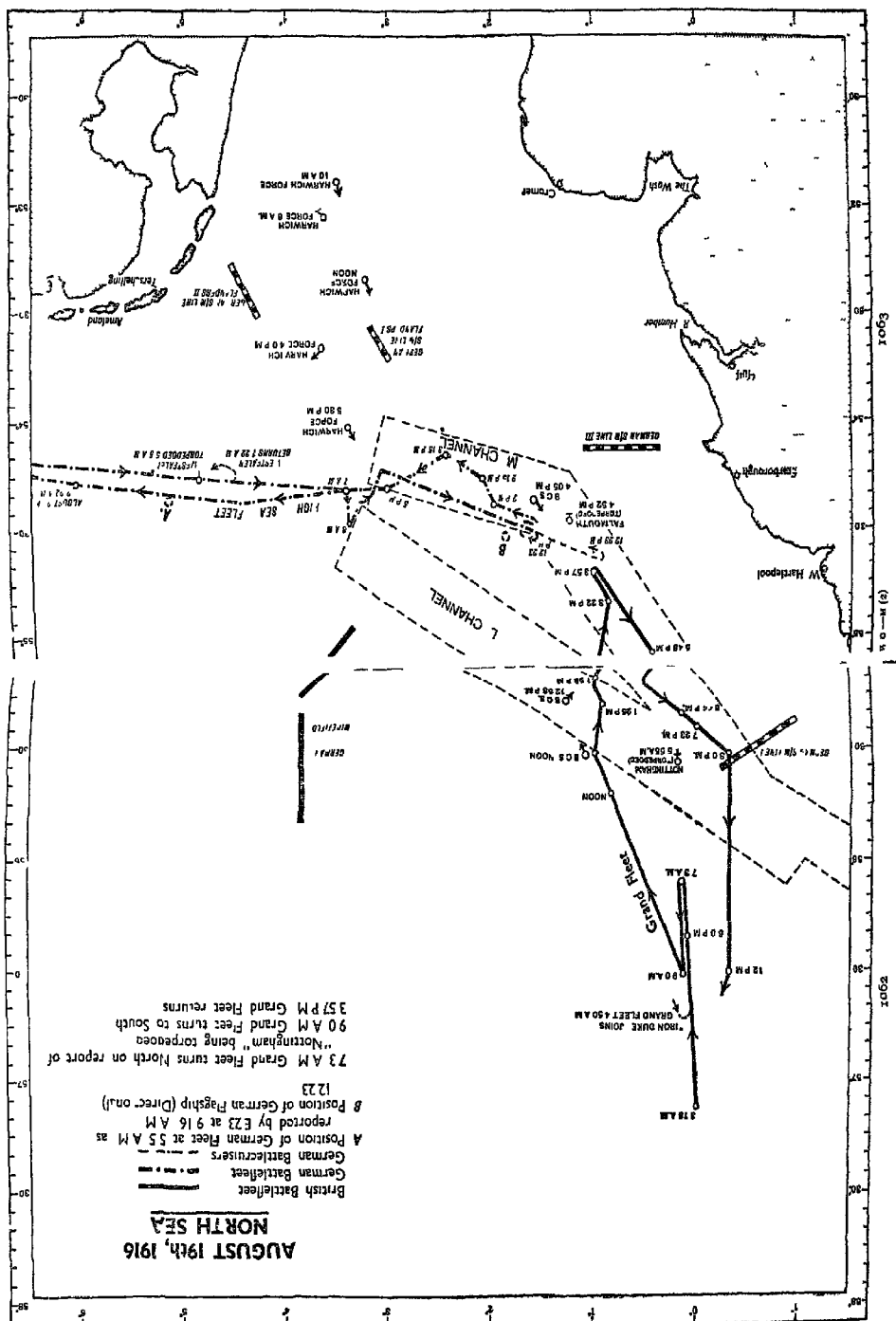
had been offered again an hour later when Scheer made his great miscalculation, and for the third time when a little before midnight the Commander-in-Chief decided to reject the evidence of the Admiralty message. Three times is a lot.

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Nevertheless one last chance of bringing the German Fleet to action was offered. Within six weeks of Jutland, on the evening of August 18, Admiral Scheer again put to sea. His object was to bombard Sunderland; and his hope, to draw the British Fleet, if it intervened, into his U-boat flotillas. His main flotilla of seventeen U-boats was disposed in two lines on the probable tracks of the British Fleet; one off Blyth and one off the Yorkshire coast; while twelve boats of the Flanders flotilla were stationed off the Dutch Coast. Four Zeppelins patrolled between Peterhead and Norway: three off the British coast between Newcastle and Hull, and one in the Flanders Bight. The German Second Battle Squadron, composed of the slow *Deutschlands*, was on this occasion not allowed to accompany the Fleet. Thus protected by the airships, bristling with U-boats, and unencumbered by their older vessels, the Germans steamed boldly on their course.

The preliminary German movements had not passed unnoticed by the Admiralty; and during the forenoon of the 18th the Grand Fleet battle squadrons were ordered to rendezvous in the 'Long Forties,' the battle-cruisers to join further south, and the Harwich force to rendezvous to the eastward of Yarmouth. Twenty-six British submarines—five in the Heligoland Bight, eight in the Flanders Bight, one off the Dutch coast and twelve off Yarmouth and the Tyne—were in their turn spread to intercept the enemy.

The movements of the two Fleets during the 19th are shown in broad outline on the chart. The day's operations were heralded by submarine attacks on both sides. At 5.5 a.m. the German battleship *Westfalen* was hit by a torpedo from the British submarine E.23, and she turned for home at 7.22. Admiral Scheer held steadily on his course with the remainder of the Fleet. About 6 a.m. the *Nottingham*, one of Beatty's advanced line of cruisers, was struck by two torpedoes from U-52, was hit again at 6.25, and sank at 7.10. At first there was some doubt whether she had been sunk by mine or torpedo. But at 6.48 a report from the *Southampton* was received by the Flagship, the *Iron Duke*, making it certain that the *Nottingham* had been sunk by a torpedo. About the same time a signal was received from the Admiralty, fixing the position of the German Fleet. Sir John Jellicoe however appears to have remained under the impression that the *Nottingham* had been destroyed by a



mine. He consequently suspected a trap ; and at 7 a.m. he turned the Grand Fleet about and steamed to the northward for over two hours, until 9.8 a.m.

It is not clear, even on the assumption that the *Nottingham* had been sunk by a mine, why this manœuvre was necessary. A comparatively slight alteration of course would have carried the Grand Fleet many miles clear of the area of the suspected mine fields, and the possibility of getting between the German Fleet and home presented itself. Such a situation had been foreseen in the Note which, with the concurrence of the First Sea Lord, I had sent to Sir John Jellicoe at the beginning of the war (August 8, 1914).

'Their Lordships would wish to emphasize that it is not part of the Grand Fleet's duty to prevent such raids, but to deal with the enemy's Battle Fleet. . . . They [the enemy] may expect you to come direct to prevent the raid, and therefore may lay one or more lines of mines across your expected course or use their submarines for the same purpose ; whereas if you approached them from an eastward or a north-eastward direction, you would cut the whole Fleet from its base . . . and you would approach by a path along which the chance of meeting mines would be sensibly reduced. In our mind therefore you should ignore the raid or raids and work by a circuitous route so as to get between the enemy's Fleet or covering force and home.'

U-52 had however struck harder than she knew. It took two hours after the Grand Fleet turned again towards the enemy to recover the lost ground. So that in all four hours were lost and the chance of cutting off the High Sea Fleet seriously reduced. It cannot however be said that this was the cause of preventing battle. An accident of a different character was to intervene. Admiral Tyrwhitt with the Harwich force was meanwhile cruising near the southern rendezvous. During the afternoon Scheer received five air-ship reports—one of the Grand Fleet and four of the Harwich force. He also received three submarine reports about the Grand Fleet. The British forces to the northward all seemed to be steaming away from him as if some concentration were taking place in that direction. At 12.35 p.m. however the German air-ship L13 reported strong British forces about seventy miles to the southward, and that these had been seen coming north at 11.30 a.m. This was of course the Harwich force. Admiral Scheer jumped to the conclusion that it was the Grand Fleet and that his retreat was compromised. He thereupon turned completely about at 1.15 and after waiting for his battle-cruisers to get ahead of him steamed for home. Meanwhile Sir John Jellicoe, having recovered his lost distance, and having received at 1.30 p.m. a signal from the

Admiralty fixing the position of the German Flagship at 12.33, was now proceeding at nineteen knots towards the area which Scheer had just vacated. The chart on board the *Iron Duke* seemed to indicate that a fleet action was imminent, and every preparation was made by Sir John Jellicoe to engage the enemy. After advancing for nearly two hours in full readiness for action, with the battle-cruisers on his starboard and the 5th Battle Squadron on his port bow, he still saw nothing of the enemy. At 3.57 all hope of meeting the Germans was abandoned and the Grand Fleet turned again homeward, losing on the way another light cruiser, the *Falmouth*, by a U-boat torpedo. At about 6 o'clock the Harwich force sighted the German Fleet. But the Grand Fleet was too far off to offer them any support, and at 7 p.m. Admiral Tyrwhitt turned for his base, and thus the operations of August 19 came to an end.

\* \* \* \* \*

I feel it unfitting to end this chapter without drawing some conclusions from the events it has attempted to describe. First: Material. What was the cause of the swift destruction of the three British battle-cruisers? The side armour of the *Invincible* was only from 6 to 7 inches thick. She was in action at under 10,000 yards range, and her magazines may well have been exploded by heavy shells which directly pierced her armour belt. But the *Queen Mary* was fighting at over 18,000 yards range when the fatal salvo struck her. She was in her place in the line undamaged, steaming 25 knots and firing from all her guns, a minute or two before she blew up. The *Indefatigable* succumbed at the same extreme range as easily. There can be only two possible explanations. Either the magazines had been penetrated by a shell, or a shell bursting in the turret had ignited the ammunition there, and the flash and flame had roared down the 60-foot hoist into the magazines. There is no doubt that the magazines of British battle-cruisers were not sufficiently protected against long-range fire. The ranges at which the sea battles of the Great War were fought were vastly greater than any contemplated before the war. Our Naval Constructors had not therefore taken sufficient account of the plunging character of the fire to which the decks and turret roofs would be subjected. The German battle-cruiser armour was better distributed. Moreover, the British battle-cruisers, as developed by Fisher and to a large extent by Jellicoe, though more heavily gunned were less strongly armoured than their German compeers. Casting a new eye on naval architecture in 1911, I had recoiled from the battle-cruiser type. To spend in those days two million pounds upon a vessel of the greatest power and speed which could not face a strong

battleship seemed to me a fruitless proceeding. I therefore opposed the increase of the battle-cruiser class in which we already had superiority, and succeeded in persuading the Board of Admiralty to cancel the battle-cruiser projected for the programme of 1912, and to build instead of one battle-cruiser and four slow battleships the five fast battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* design. I also excluded the annual battle-cruiser from the programmes of 1913 and 1914. These matters have been fully set forth in Volume I.

Nevertheless it is more likely that the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable* were destroyed by flash down the turret ammunition hoists than by penetration of their decks. The roofs of the gun-houses directly exposed to plunging fire were only 3 inches

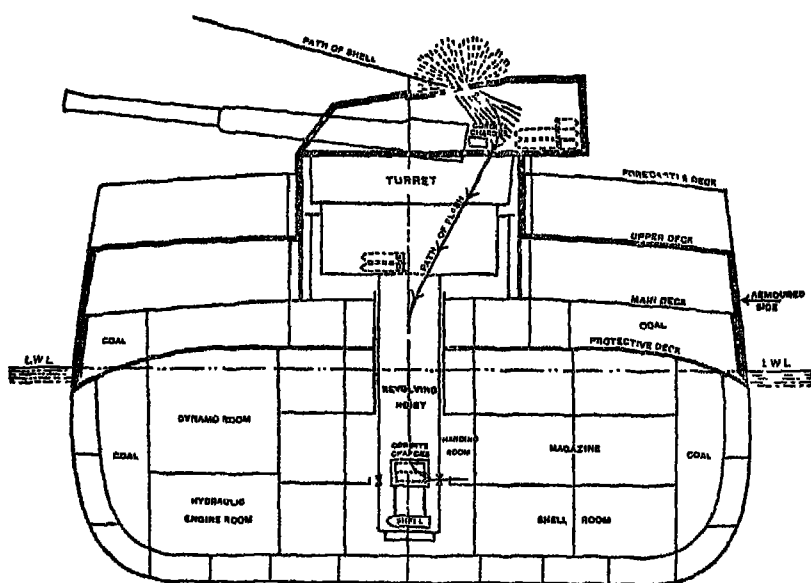


DIAGRAM SHOWING SECTION OF WARSHIP IN WAY OF TURRET  
AND EFFECT OF SHELL STRIKING ROOF OF TURRET

thick. From the working chambers of these turrets the ammunition tube led directly to the handing-room outside the magazine 60 feet below. The danger of the flash of an explosion passing down this tube had from the earliest days of modern iron-clads always been recognized. Competition in gunnery practices between ships in peace time had however led to the omission of various precautions. The magazine doors at the bottom of the tube were not doubled. One of them could not therefore be kept always closed in action. Nor were they even shrouded by



thick curtains of felt. The shutter which closed the hoist in which the charge was lifted had in some cases been removed for the sake of greater rapidity in loading. A free and easy habit of handling cordite in large quantities had grown up. The silk coverings of the British charges did not give the same security against fire as did the German brass cartridge cases, albeit that these had other disadvantages. All down the tube from the breech of the gun to the magazine, at least four double cordite charges made a complete train of explosive. The flash of a heavy shell exploding in the gun house, or of a fire starting in the cordite charges there, might in these circumstances be carried almost simultaneously into the very magazine itself. Here is the most probable cause of the destruction both of the *Queen Mary* and the *Indefatigable*, and we know how nearly the *Lion* shared their fate.

Against this danger the Germans were forewarned and forearmed by an incident in the Dogger Bank action of January, 1915. A 13.5-inch shell had penetrated the after turret of the *Seydlitz*, setting fire to the charges and to a small 'ready magazine.' A vast flame enveloped the turret and spread through the passages to the next, gutting both turrets completely and killing over two hundred men. This lesson led to drastic changes in the protection of the German ammunition supply and in drill, similar to those introduced into British ships after Jutland.

It was always argued by the Naval experts that although the later German battle-cruisers—about which we were not ill-informed—carried more armour than their British opposite numbers, this advantage was more than counter-balanced by our having far heavier guns and shells. It was however proved by the test of battle that the British heavy armour-piercing shell was inferior to the German shell of equal size in carrying its explosion through the armour. Such a result should for ever banish complacency from the technical branches of our Naval Ordnance Department, and should lead successive Boards of Admiralty repeatedly to canvass and overhaul the scientific data with which they are presented and to compare them in an open-minded mood with foreign practices.

What bearing had these deficiencies upon the chances of a general fought-out Fleet battle? This question is at once fundamental and capable of decisive answer.

On no occasion either at the Dogger Bank or Jutland did even the heaviest German shell succeed in penetrating British armour over 7½ inches thick. All hits made on 9-inch armour were effectually resisted by the plate. The vitals of all British battle-ships engaged at Jutland were protected by 13-inch, 12-inch, 11-inch, or at the very least 9-inch armour. It follows that if the

main British Battle Fleet had been seriously engaged at Jutland—apart from the ill-luck of an occasional flash carried down an ammunition hoist—it would not have suffered severely from German shell fire. We know that the main armaments and engines of the four *Queen Elizabeths* were undamaged after coming under a heavy fire from all the strongest vessels of the German Battle Fleet as well as from the German battle-cruisers. Out of five hits of 12-inch shell on their heavy armour, none penetrated. The roof of one of the *Malaya's* turrets (4½ inches) was hit by a heavy projectile without any damage being done. It may therefore be concluded that the armoured protection of the British Battle Fleet was ample to resist the 12-inch shell of the heaviest German guns afloat at Jutland.

On the other hand, at the Dogger Bank a British 13.5-inch shell pierced and burst inside the 9-inch armour of one of the *Seydlitz's* turrets; and at Jutland a British 15-inch shell penetrated the 10-inch armour on the front of the *Seydlitz's* "D" turret, and a 13.5-inch shell penetrated her 9-inch armour. In these two latter cases however the force of the explosion was expended outside. The *Lützow* at Jutland showed similar results. At least one 13.5-inch shell penetrated and burst inside 8-inch or 12-inch armour, while another drove in a 10-inch turret plate, causing a fire in the turret. At least one 15-inch shell penetrated and burst inside a 10-inch or 12-inch turret plate on the *Derfflinger*, causing a terrific fire which completely gutted the turret. Such were the results obtained in the two Fleets engaging at long range. It would be easy to add to these examples. Had the battle been fought to a conclusion at medium or shorter range, the penetration of the guns on both sides would have increased; but the superior relation of the heavier British shell would at every stage have been maintained.

It is upon this basis of ascertained fact that the numerical strength of the rival Fleets must be considered. The British superiority in the line of battle of 37 Dreadnought ships to 21 German similar units and the double weight of the British broadside were factors which may justly be described as overwhelming. The margin of safety both in numbers and in gun power was so large as to reduce the important defects mentioned to a minor scale, and to make full allowance against accidents.

In the sphere of tactics it is evident that the danger of underwater damage by mine or torpedo, the danger of 'losing half the fleet before a shot is fired,' dominated the mind of the British Commander-in-Chief. This danger, though less great than was supposed at the time, was nevertheless real and terrible. Coupled with a true measure of the disproportionate consequences of battle to the rival navies, it enforced a policy of extreme caution

upon Sir John Jellicoe. This policy was deliberately adopted by him after prolonged thought, and inflexibly adhered to, not only before and during the encounter at Jutland but afterwards. The policy cannot be condemned on account of the unsatisfying episodes to which it led, without due and constant recognition of the fatal consequences which might have followed from the opposite course or from recklessness. Admitting this however to the full, it does not cover several of the crucial Jutland situations, nor that which arose in the German sortie of August 19. Tactical movements lay open on these occasions to the Grand Fleet for gripping the enemy without in any way increasing the risk of being led into an under-water trap. A more flexible system of fleet training and manœuvring would have enabled these movements to be made. The attempt to centralize in a single hand the whole conduct in action of so vast a fleet failed. The Commander-in-Chief, with the best will in the world, could not see or even know what was going on. No attempt was made to use the fast division of battleships (*Queen Elizabeths*) to engage the enemy on the opposite side and hold him up to the battle. The British light cruiser squadrons and flotillas were not used as they ought to have been to parry and rupture hostile torpedo attacks, but these were dealt with merely by the passive turn away of the whole Fleet. The sound and prudent reasoning of the Commander-in-Chief against being led into traps did not apply to situations where the enemy was obviously himself surprised, separated from his harbours, and dealing with utterly unforeseen and unforeseeable emergencies. Praiseworthy caution had induced a defensive habit of mind and scheme of tactics which hampered the Grand Fleet even when the special conditions enjoining the caution did not exist.

The ponderous, poignant responsibilities borne successfully, if not triumphantly, by Sir John Jellicoe during two years of faithful command, constitute unanswerable claims to the lasting respect of the nation. But the Royal Navy must find in other personalities and other episodes the golden links which carried forward through the Great War the audacious and conquering traditions of the past; and it is to Beatty and the battle-cruisers, to Keyes at Zeebrugge, to Tyrwhitt and his Harwich striking force, to the destroyer and submarine flotillas out in all weathers and against all foes, to the wild adventures of the Q-ships, to the steadfast resolution of the British Merchant Service, that the eyes of rising generations will turn.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

*'Pray God that you may never know  
The Hell where youth and laughter go.'*

SIEGFRIED SASSOON.

Inevitability—Strength of the German Line—Absence of Surprise—Objective of July 1—Opening of the Battle—The 8th Division—Through German Eyes—Tragedy—The Greatest British Loss in History—The Battle sinks to a Minor Scale—Its Obstinate Prolongation—The Anatomy of the Battlefield—Conditions become more Equal—The Strain on the Enemy—The Exposure of the Tanks—Their Effect—My Memorandum of August 1, 1916—The Question of Relative Losses—Accuracy of its Figures—Actual British and German Losses—Criticism of Results—Soothing Information—Inexorable Forces—Glory of the Troops.

A SENSE of the inevitable broods over the battlefields of the Somme. The British armies were so ardent, their leaders so confident, the need and appeals of our Allies so clamant, and decisive results seemingly so near, that no human power could have prevented the attempt. All the spring the French had been battling and dying at Verdun, immolating their manhood upon that anvil-altar; and every chivalrous instinct in the new British armies called them to the succour of France, and inspired them with sacrifice and daring. Brusiloff's surprising successes redoubled, if that were possible, the confidence of the British Generals. They were quite sure they were going to break their enemy and rupture his invading lines in France. They trusted to the devotion of their troops, which they knew was boundless; they trusted to masses of artillery and shells never before accumulated in war; and they launched their attack in the highest sense of duty and the strongest conviction of success.

The military conceptions underlying the scheme of attack were characterized by simplicity. The policy of the French and British Commanders had selected as the point for their offensive what was undoubtedly the strongest and most perfectly defended position in the world.

'During nearly two years' preparation' (writes Sir Douglas Haig) 'he (the enemy) had spared no pains to render these

<sup>1</sup> Sir Douglas Haig's *Despatches*: J. H. Boraston, pp. 22-3.

defences impregnable. The first and second systems each consisted of several lines of deep trenches, well provided with bomb-proof shelters and with numerous communication trenches connecting them. The front of the trenches in each system was protected by wire entanglements, many of them in two belts forty yards broad, built of iron stakes interlaced with barbed wire, often almost as thick as a man's finger.

'The numerous woods and villages in and between these systems of defence had been turned into veritable fortresses. The deep cellars usually to be found in the villages, and the numerous pits and quarries common to a chalk country, were used to provide cover for machine guns and trench mortars. The existing cellars were supplemented by elaborate dug-outs, sometimes in two storeys, and these were connected up by passages as much as thirty feet below the surface of the ground. The salients in the enemy's line, from which he could bring enfilade fire across his front, were made into self-contained forts, and often protected by mine-fields; while strong redoubts and concrete machine-gun emplacements had been constructed in positions from which he could sweep his own trenches should these be taken. The ground lent itself to good artillery observation on the enemy's part, and he had skilfully arranged for cross-fire by his guns.

'These various systems of defence, with the fortified localities and other supporting points between them, were cunningly sited to afford each other mutual assistance and to admit of the utmost possible development of enfilade and flanking fire by machine guns and artillery. They formed, in short, not merely a series of successive lines, but one composite system of enormous depth and strength.

'Behind his second system of trenches, in addition to woods, villages and other strong points prepared for defence, the enemy had several other lines already completed; and we had learnt from aeroplane reconnaissance that he was hard at work improving and strengthening these and digging fresh ones between them, and still farther back.'

All these conditions clearly indicated to the Staffs a suitable field for our offensive, and it was certain that if the enemy were defeated here, he would be more disheartened than by being overcome upon some easier battleground.

Sir Douglas also describes his own preparations, which were thorough and straightforward.<sup>1</sup>

'Vast stocks of ammunition and stores of all kinds had to be accumulated beforehand within a convenient distance of our

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

front. To deal with these many miles of new railways—both standard and narrow gauge—and trench tramways were laid. All available roads were improved, many others were made, and long causeways were built over marshy valleys. . . . Scores of miles of deep communication trenches had to be dug, as well as trenches for telephone wires, assembly and assault trenches, and numerous gun-emplacements and observation posts.'

Thus there was no chance of surprise. Nothing could be introduced to obscure the plain trial of strength between the armies, or diminish the opportunities for valour on the part of the assaulting troops. For months the Germans had observed the vast uncamouflaged preparations proceeding opposite the sector of attack. For a week a preliminary bombardment of varying but unexampled intensity had lashed their trenches with its scourge of steel and fire. Crouched in their deep chalk caves the stubborn German infantry, short often through the cannonade of food and water, awaited the signal to man their broken parapets. The lanes which the British shrapnel had laboriously cut through their barbed-wire entanglements were all carefully studied, and machine guns were accurately sited to sweep them or traverse the approaches with flanking fire. Even one machine gun in skilled resolute hands might lay five hundred men dead and dying on the ground; and along the assaulted front certainly a thousand such weapons scientifically related in several lines of defence awaited their prey. Afar the German gunners, unmolested by counter-battery, stood ready to release their defending barrages on the British front lines, on their communication trenches and places of assembly.

Colonel Boraston's account is studiously vague as to the objectives sought for by his chief on July 1. The plan of the British and French was admittedly to pierce the whole German trench system on a front of many kilometres, and then by wheeling outwards—the British to the north-east and north and the French to the south-east—to roll up from the flanks the exposed portions of the German line; and British and French cavalry divisions were held ready to be pushed forward through the gap so made. The French objective was to gain the rising ground east of the Somme south of Péronne, while 'the corresponding British objective' was 'the semicircle of high ground running from the neighbourhood of Le Transloy through Bapaume to Achiet-le-Grand.' But these objectives, says Colonel Boraston, were not expected to be reached in the first assault. 'These Somme positions were objectives for the armies concerned rather than

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, p. 93.

for the troops from time to time engaged in the attack. They marked the stage at which it was thought that the penetration would be deep enough . . . to enable the Allied armies to turn their attention to the second stage of the battle, that is to say, the rolling up of the German forces on the flank of the point of rupture.<sup>1</sup> It was certainly contemplated from the beginning that the battle would be long and hard fought ; but it will be seen that the time factor is thus left altogether indefinite. One remains under the impression that it was comparatively immaterial whether this penetrating advance and outward movement were to be effected in a few days, a week, a fortnight, or even longer. But this argument cannot be sustained. The whole effectiveness of the plan depended on the speed of its execution. If for instance an interval of two or three days intervened between the penetration and the outward wheel, the enemy's line would be switched back on both sides of the gap and a whole new web of fortifications would obstruct a further advance. All prospect of a great rupture followed by rolling up the flanks was dependent upon a rate of progress so rapid as to preclude the construction and organization by the enemy of fresh defensive lines. If the Joffre-Haig plan was to achieve any success apart from mere attrition, progress must be continuous and rapid, and the objectives specified must be attained at the latest in two or three days. If this were not secured, the great attack would have failed. Other attacks might subsequently be planned and might be locally successful, but the scheme of a grand rupture was definitely at an end.

It is easy to prove that rapid progress was in fact contemplated and resolutely bid for. The use by Haig of his artillery clearly indicates the immediate ambitions which were in view. Instead of concentrating the fire on the first lines which were to be assaulted, the British artillery was dispersed in its action over the second and remoter lines and on many strong points far in the rear, the hope clearly being that all these would be reached in the course of the first day's or two-days' fighting. The position of the British and French cavalry in close proximity to the battle front also reveals indisputably the hopes and expectations of the commanders.

At seven o'clock in the morning of July 1 the British and French armies rose from their trenches steel-helmeted, gas-masked, equipped with all the latest apparatus of war, bombs, mortars, machine-guns light and heavy, and, supported by all their artillery, marched against the enemy on a front of 45 kilometres. Fourteen British divisions and five French divisions were almost immediately engaged.<sup>2</sup> South of the Somme on the French front

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> See map, p. 1079.

the Germans were taken completely by surprise. They had not believed the French capable after their punishment at Verdun of any serious offensive effort. They expected at the most only demonstrations. They were not ready for the French, and the French attack, though unfortunately on a needlessly small scale, captured and overwhelmed the German troops throughout the whole of their first system of trenches.

Very different were the fortunes of the British. Everywhere they found the enemy fully prepared. The seven-days' bombardment had by no means accomplished what had been expected. Safely hidden in the deep dugouts, the defenders and their machine guns were practically intact. From these they emerged with deadly effect at the moment of assault or even after the waves of attack had actually passed over and beyond them. Though the German front line was crossed at every point, the great advance into his position failed except on the right. The three British divisions on that flank captured Montauban and Mametz and an area  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles deep, thus isolating Fricourt on the south. The 21st Division north of this village also made progress and gained nearly a mile. But though the defenders of Fricourt were thus almost cut off, the attempt to storm the village failed. Northwards again the two divisions of the Third Corps, though they advanced a thousand yards, failed in spite of repeated efforts to capture La Boisselle or Ovillers on the long spurs of the Pozières plateau. By night-fall the gain in this part of the field comprised only two pockets or bulges in the enemy's position. The attack of the X Corps with three divisions broke down before the immense defences of the Thiepval spur and plateau. Although two of its great supporting points, the Leipzig and Schwaben redoubts, were captured, all attacks on Thiepval failed, and the failure to take Thiepval entailed the evacuation of the Schwaben. Opposite Beaumont-Hamel, on the extreme left, the VIII Corps, after reaching the German front line, was driven back to its own trenches. The subsidiary attack made by the Third Army against Gommecourt completely failed, practically no damage to the German defences having been done in the long bombardment.

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Let us descend from this general viewpoint into closer contact with a single Division. The 8th Division, with all its three brigades in line, was to assault the Ovillers spur: the centre brigade up the ridge; the others through the valleys on each side. Both the valleys were enfiladed from the German positions at La Boisselle and in front of Thiepval. Against these three brigades stood the German 180th Infantry Regiment with two



battalions holding the front defences, and the third battalion in reserve north of Pozières. After allowing for battalion reserves, there were ten Companies comprising about 1,800 men to oppose the three brigades, together about 8,500 bayonets, of the 8th Division.

At 7.30 the British artillery barrage lifted. The trench mortars ceased fire, and the leading battalions of all three brigades rose and moved forward, each battalion extended on a frontage of 400 yards. A violent machine-gun and rifle fire opened immediately along the whole front of the German position, particularly from the machine-gun nests of La Boisselle and Ovillers; and almost simultaneously the German batteries behind Ovillers placed a barrage in No Man's Land and along the British front line and support trenches. Here let the German eyewitness speak.

'The intense bombardment was realized by all to be a prelude to the infantry assault at last. The men in the dug-outs therefore waited ready, a belt full of hand grenades around them, gripping their rifles and listening for the bombardment to lift from the front defence zone on to the rear defences. It was of vital importance to lose not a second in taking up position in the open to meet the British infantry who would be advancing immediately behind the artillery barrage. Looking towards the British trenches through the long trench periscopes held up out of the dugout entrances, there could be seen a mass of steel helmets above their parapet showing that their storm-troops were ready for the assault. At 7.30 a.m. the hurricane of shells ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Our men at once clambered up the steep shafts leading from the dugouts to daylight and ran singly or in groups to the nearest shell craters. The machine guns were pulled out of the dug-outs and hurriedly placed into position, their crews dragging the heavy ammunition boxes up the steps and out to the guns. A rough firing line was thus rapidly established. As soon as in position, a series of extended lines of British infantry were seen moving forward from the British trenches. The first line appeared to continue without end to right and left. It was quickly followed by a second line, then a third and fourth. They came on at a steady easy pace as if expecting to find nothing alive in our front trenches. . . . The front line, preceded by a thin line of skirmishers and bombers, was now half-way across No Man's Land. "Get ready!" was passed along our front from crater to crater, and heads appeared over the crater edges as final positions were taken up for the best view and machine guns mounted firmly in place. A few minutes later, when the leading British line was within 100

yards, the rattle of machine gun and rifle fire broke out from along the whole line of craters. Some fired kneeling so as to get a better target over the broken ground, while others in the excitement of the moment, stood up regardless of their own safety to fire into the crowd of men in front of them. Red rockets sped up into the blue sky as a signal to the artillery, and immediately afterwards a mass of shells from the German batteries in rear tore through the air and burst among the advancing lines. Whole sections seemed to fall, and the rear formations, moving in closer order, quickly scattered. The advance rapidly crumpled under this hail of shells and bullets. All along the line men could be seen throwing their arms into the air and collapsing never to move again. Badly wounded rolled about in their agony, and others less severely injured crawled to the nearest shell-hole for shelter. The British soldier, however, has no lack of courage, and once his hand is set to the plough he is not easily turned from his purpose. The extended lines, though badly shaken and with many gaps, now came on all the faster. Instead of a leisurely walk they covered the ground in short rushes at the double. Within a few minutes the leading troops had reached within a stone's throw of our front trench, and while some of us continued to fire at point-blank range, others threw hand grenades among them. The British bombers answered back, while the infantry rushed forward with fixed bayonets. The noise of battle became indescribable. The shouting of orders and the shrill British cheers as they charged forward could be heard above the violent and intense fusillade of machine guns and rifles and the bursting bombs, and above the deep thundering of the artillery and the shell explosions. With all this were mingled the moans and groans of the wounded, the cries for help and the last screams of death. Again and again the extended lines of British infantry broke against the German defence like waves against a cliff, only to be beaten back.

'It was an amazing spectacle of unexampled gallantry, courage and bull-dog determination on both sides.'

At several points the British who had survived the awful fire storm broke into the German trenches. They were nowhere strong enough to maintain their position; and by nine o'clock the whole of the troops who were still alive and unwounded were either back in their own front-line trenches, or sheltering in the shell-holes of No Man's Land, or cut off and desperately defending themselves in the captured German trenches. A renewed attack was immediately ordered by Divisional Headquarters.

<sup>1</sup> *Die Schwaben an der Ancre, Gerster.*

But the Brigadiers reported they had no longer the force to attempt it. A fresh brigade was sent from the III Corps Headquarters. But before it could share the fate of the others, all signs of fighting inside the German trenches by the British who had entered them had been extinguished; and the orders to renew the assault were cancelled. Here are some of the losses:

2/Middlesex . . . . .	22	officers	592	other ranks
2/Devons . . . . .	16	"	418	" "
2/West Yorks . . . . .	16	"	490	" "
2/Berkshire . . . . .	20	"	414	" "
2/Lincoln . . . . .	20	"	434	" "
1/Irish Rifles . . . . .	17	"	411	" "
8/K.O.Y.L.I. . . . .	25	(all),	522	" "
8/York and Lancaster . . . . .	23	"	613	" "
9/York and Lancaster . . . . .	23	"	517	" "
11/Sherwood Foresters . . . . .	20	"	488	" "

In all, the Division lost in little more than two hours 218 out of 300 officers and 5,274 other ranks out of 8,500 who had gone into action. By the evening of July 1, the German 180th Infantry Regiment was again in possession of the whole of its trenches. Its losses during the day's fighting had been 8 officers and 273 soldiers killed, wounded and missing. Only two of its three battalions had been engaged. It had not been necessary to call the reserve battalion to their aid.

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Night closed over the still-thundering battlefield. Nearly 60,000 British soldiers had fallen, killed or wounded, or were prisoners in the hands of the enemy. This was the greatest loss and slaughter sustained in a single day in the whole history of the British Army. Of the infantry who advanced to the attack, nearly half had been overtaken by death, wounds or capture. Against this, apart from territory, we had gained 4,000 prisoners and a score of cannon. It needs some hardihood for Colonel Boraston to write:<sup>1</sup>

'The events of July 1 . . . bore out the conclusions of the British higher command and amply justified the tactical methods employed.'

The extent of the catastrophe was concealed by the Censorship, and its significance masked by a continuance of the fighting on a far smaller scale, four divisions alone being employed. The shattered divisions on the left were placed under General Gough, whose command, originally designated the 'Reserve Corps' and intended to receive resting divisions, was renamed the 'Reserve Army' and given orders to maintain 'a slow and methodical pressure' on the enemy's front. Henceforward the battle

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, p. 103.

degenerated into minor operations which proceeded continuously on a comparatively small front. The losses were however in this phase more evenly balanced, as the Germans delivered many vigorous counter-attacks.

'To sum up the results of the fighting of these five days' (says Haig with severe accuracy) 'on a front of over six miles . . . our troops had swept over the whole of the enemy's first and strongest system of defence. . . . They had driven him back over a distance of more than a mile, and had carried four elaborately fortified villages.'

These gains had however been purchased by the loss of nearly a hundred thousand of our best troops. The battle continued. The objectives were now pulverized villages and blasted woods, and the ground conquered was at each stage so limited both in width and depth as to exclude any strategic results. On July 14 a dawn attack towards Bazentin-le-Grand led to a local success, and the world was eagerly informed that a squadron of the 7th Dragoon Guards had actually ridden on their horses as far as High Wood, whence they were withdrawn the next day.

'The enemy's second main system of defence' (writes Sir Douglas)<sup>1</sup> 'had been captured on a front of over three miles. We had forced him back more than a mile. . . . Four more of his fortified villages and three woods had been wrested from him by determined fighting, and our advanced troops had penetrated as far as his third line of defence.'

Unfortunately the enemy 'had dug and wired many new trenches, both in front and behind his original front lines. He had also brought up fresh troops, and there was no possibility of taking him by surprise. The task before us was therefore a very difficult one. . . . At this juncture its difficulties were increased by unfavourable weather.'

As the divisions which had been specially prepared for the battle were successively shot to pieces and used up, their remnants were sent to hold the trenches in the quiet portions of the front, thus setting free other divisions, not previously engaged, for their turn in the furnace. It was not until July 20 that the battle again expanded to the proportions of a great operation. On this day and the two days following a general attack was organized by seventeen British and French Divisions on the front Pozières-Foucaucourt. The losses were again very heavy, particularly to the British. Only a few hundred yards were gained upon the average along the front.

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches*, p. 27.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.



The conflict sank once more to the bloody but local struggles of two or three divisions repeatedly renewed as fast as they were consumed, and consumed as fast as they were renewed. By the end of July an advance of about two and a half miles had been made on a front which at this depth did not exceed two miles. For these gains 171,000<sup>1</sup> British soldiers had fallen—killed or wounded. 11,400 German prisoners had been captured, but more than double that number of British prisoners and wounded had fallen into the hands of the enemy, of whom many had under the terrible conditions of the battle perished between the fighting lines beyond the aid of friend or foe.

The anatomy of the battles of Verdun and the Somme was the same. A battlefield had been selected. Around this battlefield walls were built—double, triple, quadruple—of enormous cannon. Behind these railways were constructed to feed them, and mountains of shells were built up. All this was the work of months. Thus the battlefield was completely encircled by thousands of guns of all sizes, and a wide oval space prepared in their midst. Through this awful arena all the divisions of each army, battered ceaselessly by the enveloping artillery, were made to pass in succession, as if they were the teeth of interlocking cog-wheels grinding each other.

For month after month the ceaseless cannonade continued at its utmost intensity, and month after month the gallant divisions of heroic human beings were torn to pieces in this terrible rotation. Then came the winter, pouring down rain from the sky to clog the feet of men, and drawing veils of mist before the hawk-eyes of their artillery. The arena, as used to happen in the Coliseum in those miniature Roman days, was flooded with water. A vast sea of ensanguined mud, churned by thousands of vehicles, by hundreds of thousands of men and millions of shells, replaced the blasted dust. Still the struggle continued. Still the remorseless wheels revolved. Still the auditorium of artillery roared. At last the legs of men could no longer move; they wallowed and floundered helplessly in the slime. Their food, their ammunition lagged behind them along the smashed and choked roadways.

As the battle progressed the conditions of offence and defence became more equal. Trenches were obliterated and barbed wire pulverized. The combats tended increasingly to become field actions in a wilderness of shell holes. The enemy's losses grew as the weeks wore on. The battle flared up again into a great operation on September 25 and the following days; and November 13 saw large scale attacks along the Ancre tributary and the brilliant storm of Beaumont-Hamel.

<sup>1</sup> i.e., 196,000 minus 25,000 for the quiet sectors. *Military Effort*, Monthly Returns, p. 253 *et seq.*

Although the Germans used and risked at almost every stage much smaller numbers of men than the attacking British, the experiences of defence for these smaller numbers were probably even more terrible than for the attack, and the moral effect upon the Germany Army of seeing position after position, trench after trench, captured and its defenders slaughtered or made prisoners, was undoubtedly deeply depressing. While the British, in spite of their far greater losses, felt themselves to be constantly advancing, and were cheered by captures of trophies and prisoners, the steadfast German soldiery could not escape the impression that they were being devoured piecemeal by the stronger foe. The effect was lasting. German shock troops and assault divisions were in later campaigns to show the highest qualities, and achieve wonderful feats of arms. But never again did the mass of German rank and file fight as they fought on the Somme.

The German 27th Division which defended Guillemont was one of the best divisions here engaged.

Its history says:

'Incontestably a culminating point was reached (at the Somme) that was never again approached. What we experienced surpassed all previous conception. The enemy's fire never ceased for an hour. It fell day and night on the front line and tore fearful gaps in the ranks of the defenders; it fell on the approaches to the front line and made all movement towards the front hell; it fell on the rearward trenches and the battery positions and smashed up men and material in a manner never seen before or since; it repeatedly reached even the resting battalions far behind the front and there occasioned exceptionally painful losses, and our artillery was powerless against it.'

And again:

'In the Somme fighting of 1916 there was a spirit of heroism which was never again found in the division, however conspicuous it (the division) remained until the end of the war' . . . 'the men in 1918 had not the temper, the hard bitterness and spirit of sacrifice of their predecessors.'<sup>1</sup>

As the attackers became more experienced, the system of deep dugouts turned against the Germans. 'The Entente troops,' wrote Ludendorff,<sup>2</sup> 'worked their way further and further into the German lines. We had heavy losses in men and material. At that time the front lines were still strongly held. The men took refuge in dugouts and cellars from the enemy's artillery fire. The

<sup>1</sup> *Die 27 Infanterie Division im Weltkrieg.*

<sup>2</sup> *My War Memories*, p. 244.

enemy came up behind their barrage, got into the trenches and villages before our men could crawl out from their shelter. A continuous yield of prisoners to the enemy was the result. The strain on physical and moral strength was tremendous and divisions could only be kept in the line for a few days at a time. . . . The number of available divisions was shrinking . . . units were hopelessly mixed up, the supply of ammunition was getting steadily shorter. . . . The situation on the Western front gave cause for greater anxiety than I had anticipated. But at that time I did not realize its full significance. It was just as well, otherwise I could never have had the courage to take the important decision to transfer still more divisions from the heavily engaged Western front to the Eastern in order to recover the initiative there and deal Roumania a decisive blow.'

The increasing sense of dominating the enemy and the resolute desire for a decision at all costs led in September to a most improvident disclosure of the caterpillar vehicles. The first of these had early in January been manoeuvred in Hatfield Park in the presence of the King, Lord Kitchener and several high authorities. Lord Kitchener was sceptical; but Mr. Lloyd George was keen, and the British Headquarters mildly interested. Fifty of these engines, developed with great secrecy under the purposely misleading name of 'Tanks,' had been completed. They arrived in France during the early stages of the Battle of the Somme for experimental purposes and the training of their crews. When it was seen how easily they crossed trenches and flattened out entanglements made for trial behind the British line, the force of the conception appealed to the directing minds of the Army. The Headquarters Staff, hitherto so lukewarm, now wished to use them at once in the battle. Mr. Lloyd George thought this employment of the new weapon in such small numbers premature. He informed me of the discussion which was proceeding. I was so shocked at the proposal to expose this tremendous secret to the enemy upon such a petty scale and as a mere make-weight to what I was sure could only be an indecisive operation, that I sought an interview with Mr. Asquith, of whom I was then a very definite opponent. The Prime Minister received me in the most friendly manner, and listened so patiently to my appeal that I thought I had succeeded in convincing him. But if this were so, he did not make his will effective; and on September 15 the first Tanks, or 'large armoured cars' as they were called in the Communiqué, went into action on the front of the Fourth Army attacking between the Combles ravine and Martinpuich.

In a memorandum drawn up by General Swinton several months before, when he was organizing the Tank Corps, it had been urged that the tanks should lead the attack, combined in as large num-



bers as possible, with large forces or infantry launched at once behind them. This advice was not accepted. The tanks—what there were—were dispersed in twos and threes against specified strong points or singly for special purposes. They were used as the merest makeweight. Of 59 tanks in France 49 reached the battlefield, and of these 35 reached their starting points, of which 31 crossed the German trenches. Although suffering from all the diseases of infancy, and with their crews largely untrained, it was immediately proved that a new factor had been introduced into the war. One single tank on this first occasion, finding the attacking infantry held up in front of Flers by wire and machine guns, climbed over the German trench, and travelling along behind it, immediately and without loss forced its occupants, 300 strong, to surrender. Only 9 tanks surmounted all the difficulties and pushed on ahead of the infantry. Wherever a tank reached its objective, the sight of it was enough, and the astounded Germans forthwith fled or yielded. Ten days later, on September 25, another tank, a female, followed by two companies of infantry, cleared 1,500 yards of the Gird Trench, and took 8 German officers and 362 men prisoners, apart from numerous killed and wounded, with a total loss to the British of only 5 men. Let these episodes be contrasted with the massacre of the 8th Division already described.

Meanwhile, to achieve this miniature success, and to carry the education of the professional mind one stage further forward, a secret of war which well used would have procured a world-shaking victory in 1917 had been recklessly revealed to the enemy. Providentially however the scales of convention darkened also the vision of the German General Staff and clouded even the keen eye of Ludendorff. In the same way the Germans had exposed their secret plans of poison gas by its use on a small scale at Ypres in 1915, when they had no reserves ready to exploit the initial success. But their enemy did not in that instance neglect the knowledge they were given.

\* \* \* \* \*

I turn aside from the narrative to examine a once keen controversy in which I engaged myself.

During the whole month of July the public and the Cabinet were continually assured that the losses of the Germans in the Somme Battle far exceeded our own. It is certainly necessary not to discourage by the publication of shocking figures an army or a nation during the progress of a great battle; but a Government is entitled to know the facts from its servants. I held no official position at this time; but applying my knowledge and judgment to all the information I could acquire, I formed my own

opinion upon the reports with which I was told the Cabinet were being furnished. I said of course no word in public, but viewing with the utmost pain the terrible and disproportionate slaughter of our troops and the delusions that were rife, I felt it my duty to place on record my appreciation of the facts. I showed this appreciation when written to Sir Frederick Smith,<sup>1</sup> a member of the Cabinet and Attorney-General, with whom I had been for many years on terms of the closest friendship. He thought it right to have it printed and circulated officially to his colleagues. I reprint it here with his covering note.

In the course of conversation with myself, Winston Churchill asserted his views with regard to the offensive now taking place in the West. I am by no means wholly in agreement with his standpoint, thinking, as I do, that he underrates the importance of our offensive as a contribution to the general strategical situation. I suggested, however, that he should embody his views in a memorandum.

He has done so. After careful consideration, I formed the view that the result would interest my colleagues and enable them to apply their minds to the situation which develops from day to day with both the official and a critical view before them.

I therefore circulate the memorandum.

F.S.

#### MEMORANDUM.

1. The British attack on the 1st and 2nd July was upon a front of, say, 20,000 to 25,000 yards. On nearly three-fifths of this distance it was repulsed. On rather more than two-fifths it advanced our lines about 2 miles. *Fourteen* British divisions were engaged, exposing (at about 10,000 bayonets each) 140,000 infantry to the full severity of battle.

The facts as  
now known:  
27,000 yards

Fifteen

On the front attacked the Germans had *eight* seven divisions, of which *five* were in the line and *three* in four three reserve. Of the 50,000 bayonets comprised in the five divisions in the line, 20,000 were probably in the first system of trenches, 20,000 more in support, and 10,000 in divisional reserve. The 20,000 in the first system of trenches would be the chief sufferers from the bombardment, because they cannot move away from the positions bombarded, and we may assume 50 per cent. loss to them along the whole front *plus* prisoners taken on the section successfully assaulted—10,000+4,000. The supporting troops can be moved about to avoid the shelled localities, and 25 per cent. loss among them to cover bombardment casualties and losses incurred in reinforce-

<sup>1</sup> Later Lord Birkenhead.

ment or counter-attack is a liberal estimate—5,000. Ten per cent. is sufficient for the divisional reserves—1,000. Total German loss in the first phase, 20,000, of which 4,000 prisoners and 8,000 killed, died of wounds, or disabled for the war (i.e. half the remainder) represent permanent loss—12,000.

What were the British losses? They were certainly down to midnight on the 2nd July not less than 60,000, and of these more than 20,000 were missing, i.e. killed, wounded, or prisoners in the enemy's hands. The Cabinet should require precise figures. On the above basis, however, the permanent loss might be calculated roughly as follows:

Missing	...	...	...	...	20,000
Dead or died of wounds in our own hands at					
25 per cent. of the remainder	...	...	...	...	10,000
Disabled for the war about ditto	...	...	...	...	10,000
<hr/>					
Total British permanent loss	...	...	...	...	40,000
Total German	„	„	...	...	12,000

It is believed that both these totals are more favourable to us than the actual facts.

2. Since the first attack the fighting has narrowed to a front of about 7,000 yards, and has become less one-sided owing to German counter-attacks. Our total loss to the end of July is probably 150,000. This is equivalent to 171,000 half the effective bayonets of thirty divisions. How many divisions have been engaged? How many have been deprived through losses of an offensive value within the next three months? How many fresh divisions are there left? These are serious considerations.

What of the enemy? Out of roughly 120 divisions 120½ west of the Rhine about thirty-five were, before the battle, opposite the British and the rest opposite the French and Belgians. The two main concentrations were on the British front and against Verdun. How many additional divisions have been concentrated against the British during the progress of this battle, and where have they come from?

We know that the whole front against us is firmly held. It has been tested at many points, and the enemy has himself shown enterprise and activity at many others. In particular the Australian attack south of Armentières met with most formidable resistance, and our troops were expelled from the German trenches with a loss said to be nearly 3,000. The line opposite the French has also been tested at many points in its 400-mile length, and the front is found everywhere to be

effectively maintained by the enemy. The Germans usually hold their lines with the minimum numbers consistent with safety, and it is not likely they can have removed any appreciable force from any part of the ordinary front. There remain only out of the troops west of the Rhine their general reserves, and the concentration in front of Verdun, who could be drawn on. How many divisions have been moved opposite the British from these two sources? Statements that the Germans have brought up thirty divisions opposite to the British should be distrusted. Where can they have come from? The fact that units of thirty divisions have been identified by contact, if true, is no proof. *It may well be that individual regiments or battalions which were resting have been scraped from different parts of the line to meet the local emergency: but it is not seen how more than the equivalent six or seven additional divisions can have been brought to the sector under the British attack. If this be so, the total German force successively or simultaneously engaged in the battle with us cannot exceed fourteen or fifteen divisions.* It is probably less. The diaries of German officers published show how numbers and reserves are stinted, and how much is expected of every unit engaged. The impression which these diaries produce is of lavish use of superior numbers on the British side and rather callous sacrifice of very inferior forces on the German; in other words, they are maintaining their defence 'on the cheap,' and by minor expedients of reinforcement.

3. Assuming however that as many as the equivalent of fifteen German divisions have at one time or another been engaged in this battle against, say, thirty British divisions, how has the proportion of loss fallen on the two armies after the first shock?

If out of thirty British divisions put through the mill we have lost in the second phase 90,000, the Germans *at the same rate* would have lost on fifteen divisions engaged about 45,000. This would make the totals to date:

British	...	...	...	...	150,000
Germans	...	...	...	...	65,000 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These figures give a proportion of British to German losses of 2.3 to 1. Sir Douglas Haig, in his final despatch upon the Somme, committed himself to the following positive assertion: 'There is nevertheless sufficient evidence,

'The Germans scraped from the Somme to Rheims all the 3rd battalions which constituted the local reserves of sectors: they obtained thus about 13 battalions belonging to 8 different Army Corps.' Lieut.-Col. Corda: *La Guerre Mondiale*, p. 174.

#### German Divisions Engaged.

July 1 ...	...	...	7
July 1-9 ...	...	...	2 more.
July 10-21 ...	...	...	5 more.
July 21-31 ...	...	...	2 more.

Total ... 16

This is probably more favourable to us than the truth.

4. Leaving *personnel* and coming to ground gained, we have not conquered in a month's fighting as much ground as we were expected to gain in the first two hours. We have not advanced 3 miles in the direct line at any point. We have only penetrated to that depth on a front of 8,000 or 10,000 yards. Penetration upon so narrow a front is quite useless for the purpose of breaking the line. It would be fatal to advance through a gap of this small size, which could be swept by a cross-fire of artillery. We are therefore now trying to broaden the gap by attacking sideways to the north. This is a very slow business. In four weeks we have progressed less than a mile. Unless a gap of at least 20 miles can be opened, no large force could be put through. Even then it would have to fight a 'manœuvre battle' for which neither its training nor the experience of its staffs has prepared it, under adverse conditions.

But the month that has passed has enabled the enemy to make whatever preparations behind his original lines he may think necessary. He is already defending a 500-mile front in France alone, and the construction of extra lines about 10 miles long to loop in the small sector now under attack is no appreciable strain on his labour or trench stores. He could quite easily by now have converted the whole countryside in front of our attack into successive lines of defence and fortified posts. What should we have done in the same time in similar circumstances? Anything he has left undone in this respect is due only to his confidence. A very powerful hostile artillery has now been

to place it beyond doubt that the enemy's losses in men and material have been very considerably higher than those of the Allies.' \*

Colonel Boraston has now admitted the miscalculation which was made. 'Such figures as are now available,' he writes, 'do not bear out this view so far as the British front is concerned. The total British casualties on the Western front between July 1 and November 19, 1916, were some 463,000. A calculation based on German returns made available since the Armistice, state the German casualties incurred opposite the British during this period as about 218,000' † Making an allowance, which is certainly reasonable, for casualties on both sides on the quiet sectors, Colonel Boraston states the actual British casualties in the Battle of the Somme at about 410,000 and the German casualties against them at 180,000. This yields the proportion of 2.27 British casualties to 1 German, or almost exactly the estimate of my memorandum.

The Headquarters Staff estimates dated August 1 placed the German loss in July at 'certainly not less than 130,000 men,' as against my estimate of 65,000 at the same date. The *Reichsarchiv's* returns give the figure for July on the whole British front of 59,493. The British Monthly Returns show a British total of 196,000 for July. Deducting one eighth from both for casualties on the quiet sectors, we reach the figures of German loss in July 52,000, and British 171,000.

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\* Sir Douglas Haig's *Despatches*, p. 52.

† Sir Douglas Haig's *Command*, 1915-18, p. 149.

assembled against us, and this will greatly aggravate the difficulties of further advance.

5. Nor are we making for any point of strategic or political consequence. Verdun at least would be a trophy—to which sentiment on both sides has become mistakenly attached. But what are Péronne and Bapaume, even if we were likely to take them? The open country towards which we are struggling by inches is capable of entrenched defence at every step, and is utterly devoid of military significance. There is no question of breaking the line, of 'letting loose the cavalry in the open country behind,' or of inducing a general withdrawal of the German armies in the West. No *local* strategic advantages of any kind have been reaped or can be expected.

The tactical form of the attack seems open to comment. Surprise—which played a vital part in the Russian victories and in the French attack—was wholly lacking. Nor was there that *overwhelming* concentration of artillery on particular points which characterized the German operations against Verdun. The sector selected for assault was one where the chalky ground enabled very deep entrenchments and dug-outs to be made, and was therefore far less adapted to the first employment of our new and very powerful artillery than some other portions of the front.

In *personnel* the results of the operation have been disastrous ; in *terrain* they have been absolutely barren. And, although our brave troops on a portion of the front, mocking their losses and ready to make every sacrifice, are at the moment elated by the small advances made and the capture of prisoners and *souvenirs*, the ultimate moral effect will be disappointing. From every point of view, therefore, the British offensive *per se* has been a great failure. With twenty times the shell, and five times the guns, and more than double the losses, the gains have but little exceeded those of Loos. And how was Loos viewed in retrospect?

6. It remains to consider the effects of this tremendous and most valiant effort on the general situation in the West and other theatres.

It is too early to say whether the British offensive had forced the enemy to suspend during its continuance his costly attacks on Verdun. As soon as our offensive is definitely mastered it will be open to him either to renew them or to use his successful defence against us as a cloak or an excuse for getting out of the job. No doubt the French are pleased. Having suffered so much themselves in blood, they think it is only fair we should suffer too. Their own attack on our right was a fairly profitable operation. This is the solitary advantage in the West.

Nor can it be claimed that our offensive was necessary to the Russian successes in the East. Their greatest success was gained largely by surprise before we had begun. We could have held the Germans on our front just as well by threatening an offensive as by making one. By cutting the enemy's wire, by bombardments, raiding and general activity at many unexpected points begun earlier and kept up later, we could have made it impossible for him to withdraw any appreciable force.

No important advances or captures were made by the Russians after the opening of the Somme Battle.

If the French were pressed at Verdun we could have taken over more line and thus liberated reinforcements.

7. So long as an army possesses a strong offensive power, it rivets its adversary's attention. But when the kick is out of it, when the long-saved-up effort has been expended, the enemy's anxiety is relieved, and he recovers his freedom of movement. This is the danger into which we are now drifting. We are using up division after division—not only those originally concentrated for the attack, but many taken from all parts of the line. After being put through the mill and losing perhaps half their infantry and two-thirds of their infantry officers, these shattered divisions will take several months to recover, especially as they will in many cases have to go into the trenches at once.

Thus the pent-up energies of the army are being dissipated, and if the process is allowed to go on, the enemy will not be under the need of keeping so many troops on our front as heretofore. He will then be able to restore or sustain the situation against Russia.

W. S. C.

*August 1, 1916.*

The statements in this memorandum were resented and repudiated both in the Cabinet and at General Headquarters, to which a copy soon found its way. There is no doubt that I did not make sufficient allowance for the compulsion to an offensive exercised by the blind movement of events. The facts were however only too true.

I have thought it right to thrash this controversy out in detail, to vindicate the claim which I make that I pass no important criticisms on the conduct of commanders in the light of after knowledge unless there exists documentary proof that substantially the same criticisms were put on record before or during the event and while every point was disputed and unknowable.

Sir Douglas Haig was not at this time well served by his advisers in the Intelligence Department of General Headquarters. The temptation to tell a Chief in a great position the things he most

likes to hear is one of the commonest explanations of mistaken policy. An Emperor, a Commander-in-Chief, even a Prime Minister in peace or war, is in the main surrounded by smiling and respectful faces. Most people who come in contact with him in times of strain feel honoured by contact with so much power or in sympathy with the bearer of such heavy burdens. They are often prompted to use smooth processes, to mention some favourable item, to leave unsaid some ugly misgiving or some awkward contradiction. Thus the outlook of the leader on whose decision fateful events depend is usually far more sanguine than the brutal facts admit.

In political life there are many correctives: there is no walk so crowded with candid friends as Parliament. Apart from this, there is in time of peace organized opposition which with tireless industry assembles all the worst possible facts, draws from them the most alarming conclusions, and imputes the most unworthy motives. But the head of a great army in time of war has no such balancing apparatus. His power over his subordinates is practically absolute. Their loyalty, their sense of discipline, lead them to try to win his favour, or at least to spare his feelings, on every occasion. A sign of displeasure on his part at some objectionable piece of news might easily be interpreted by a subordinate as a wish to be freed from such inflictions. The whole habit of mind of a military staff is based upon subordination of opinion. It is not every councillor who, like the Bastard in 'King John,' will say to his sovereign:

'But if you be afeared to hear the worst,  
Then let the worst unheard fall on your head.'

Yet when events are surveyed in retrospect, it does not seem just to throw the reproach of this battle upon Sir Douglas Haig. The esoteric Buddhists believe that at the end of each life a new being is created, heir to the faults or the virtues of his forerunner. The tragedies of 1916 had been decreed by the events of 1915. The failure of the Allied Governments in that year to effect the destruction of Turkey and the union of the Balkans against the Central Powers left open no favourable means of action. The French agony at Verdun compelled a British relieving counter-attack in France, before the new British armies, and particularly their vastly expanded artillery, were sufficiently trained to save the assaulting troops the heaviest loss. The Tanks, though already conceived, had yet to be born and reared. Resources did not exist sufficient to mount simultaneously several offensives along the battle front, thus leaving the enemy uncertain to the last moment of the true point of attack. Indispensable preparation destroyed equally indispensable surprise. Yet the call to attack was peremptory. Delay was



impossible. Sir Douglas Haig, like all the Commanders on the Western Front, would no doubt, had he been responsible, have opposed the great turning movement in the south-east of Europe which was possible in 1915 and the consequences of which alone could have yielded decisive results in 1916. He was also confident and convinced of breaking the German front upon the Somme. But had he been as reluctant as he was ardent to attack the German positions, he could not have remained idle. Inexorable forces carried rulers and ruled along together as the wheels of Fate revolved.

Nevertheless the campaign of 1916 on the Western Front was from beginning to end a welter of slaughter, which after the issue was determined left the British and French armies weaker in relation to the Germans than when it opened, while the actual battle fronts were not appreciably altered, and except for the relief of Verdun, which relieved the Germans no less than the French, no strategic advantage of any kind had been gained. The German unwisdom in attacking Verdun was more than cancelled in French casualties, and almost cancelled in the general strategic sphere by the heroic prodigality of the French defence. The loss in prestige which the Germans sustained through their failure to take Verdun was to be more than counterbalanced by their success in another theatre while all the time they kept their battle front unbroken on the Somme.

But this sombre verdict, which it seems probable posterity will endorse in still more searching terms, in no way diminishes the true glory of the British Army. A young army, but the finest we have ever marshalled; improvised at the sound of the cannonade, every man a volunteer, inspired not only by love of country but by a widespread conviction that human freedom was challenged by military and Imperial tyranny, they grudged no sacrifice however unfruitful and shrank from no ordeal however destructive. Struggling forward through the mire and filth of the trenches, across the corpse-strewn crater fields, amid the flaring, crashing, blasting barrages and murderous machine-gun fire, conscious of their race, proud of their cause, they seized the most formidable soldiery in Europe by the throat, slew them and hurled them unceasingly backward. If two lives or ten lives were required by their commanders to kill one German, no word of complaint ever rose from the fighting troops. No attack however forlorn, however fatal, found them without ardour. No slaughter however desolating prevented them from returning to the charge. No physical conditions however severe deprived their commanders of their obedience and loyalty. Martyrs not less than soldiers, they fulfilled the high purpose of duty with which they were imbued. The battlefields of the Somme were

the graveyards of Kitchener's Army. The flower of that generous manhood which quitted peaceful civilian life in every kind of workaday occupation, which came at the call of Britain, and as we may still hope, at the call of humanity, and came from the most remote parts of her Empire, was shorn away for ever in 1916. Unconquerable except by death, which they have conquered, they have set up a monument of native virtue which will command the wonder, the reverence and the gratitude of our island people as long as we endure as a nation among men.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ROUMANIAN DISASTER

Roumania declares War—Fall of Falkenhayn—Hindenburg and Ludendorff—The Usurpation of the German General Staff—The Roumanian Opportunity gone—Rash Precautions—The Salonica Factor—Sarrait's Offensive—Jeopardy of Roumania—Disposition of her Armies—Russian Misgivings—Turturkai—The Closing Jaws—The Common Woe—The Autumn at Verdun—Nivelle and Mangin—Douaumont, October 24.

WE have seen how easily at the beginning of 1916 Roumania in her isolated position could have been induced or compelled to join the Teutonic Powers. We have seen how Falkenhayn, by turning to the west towards France and allowing Austria to do the same towards Italy, had relieved Roumania from adverse pressure and enabled her to preserve for another six months her attitude of ambiguous watchfulness. Events of a decided character were now to take place.

At the end of August the second of the two great catastrophes which Falkenhayn's un wisdom had prepared fell upon the Central Empires. Roumania declared war. Although this danger had been approaching since Brusiloff's victory at the beginning of June, and important precautionary measures taken to guard against it, the actual declaration came much sooner than the German Government had expected, and fell as a shock upon German public opinion. A spontaneous movement of anger and disgust swept across the German Empire. The position of Germany was indeed more critical at this juncture than at any other period of the war until the final collapse. The Battle of Verdun was still making enormous inroads upon German resources, and a most serious moral defeat impended there. The Battle of the Somme was in full blast. The British, undeterred by their losses, continued to throw fresh divisions into the struggle, and to launch their formidable attacks at brief intervals. The strain upon the Germans in the West was intense. The sense of failure at Verdun, and of being slowly overpowered and worn down by superior forces on the Somme, had affected the morale of their troops. Physical exhaustion and battle losses had reduced the German reserves to the slenderest proportions, and many more weeks of crisis and uncertainty lay between the hard-pressed front and the shield of winter. Meanwhile the failure

of Austria was glaring. The whole Southern front in the East was still in a state of flux. The Russian tide rolled forward; no limits could yet be assigned to its advance. Scores of thousands of Czech troops had eagerly surrendered to the enemy, and were being enrolled bodily as a separate army corps in the Russian ranks. The Italian counter-offensive on the Isonzo was developing. The whole resisting power of the Austro-Hungarian Empire quivered on the verge of collapse. At this moment a fresh, brave and well-trained army of 500,000 Roumanians was thrown into the adverse scale, and entered the conflict in that very theatre where the Teutonic Powers were weakest and most vulnerable. The vital granaries and oil-fields of Roumania were lost, and even the great Hungarian Plain itself was in dire peril. All the time the pressure of the blockade sapped the vitality of the German masses, and hampered and complicated at a thousand points the manufacture of war material.

In this dark and almost desperate hour the Emperor, interpreting the mood of the German people, turned to the great twin captains of war who had defended the Eastern marches so long against heavy odds, and on whose brows still shone the lustre of Tannenberg. On August 28, the morrow of the Roumanian declaration, Falkenhayn was notified by Count Von Lyncker, head of the Emperor's Military Cabinet, that His Majesty had decided to summon Hindenburg and Ludendorff to his presence. Rightly accepting this intimation as dismissal, Falkenhayn resigned forthwith; and that same evening Hindenburg as Chief of the Staff, and Ludendorff as First Quartermaster-General<sup>1</sup> with equal powers, assumed the supreme direction of the Central Empires in the war.

What are the relations between these two men? Hindenburg has described them as those of a happy marriage. 'In such a relationship,' he writes,<sup>2</sup> 'how can a third party clearly distinguish the merits of the individuals? They are one in thought and action, and often what the one says is only the expression of the wishes and feelings of the other. After I had learnt the worth of General Ludendorff, and that was soon, I realized that one of my principal tasks was as far as possible to give free scope to the intellectual powers, the almost superhuman capacity for work and untiring resolution of my Chief of Staff, and if necessary clear the way for him, the way in which our common desires and our common goal pointed. . . . The harmony of our military and political convictions formed the basis for our joint views as to the proper use of our resources. Differences of

<sup>1</sup> In the German Army the deputies of the Chief of the General Staff bore the old title of Quartermaster-General.

<sup>2</sup> *Out of my Life*. Marshal von Hindenburg, p. 84.

opinion were easily reconciled, without our relations being disturbed by a feeling of forced submission on either side.'

The old Field-Marshal was uplifted by his patriotism and character above jealousy. His great age and the vast changes which had taken place in warfare since he had passed his military prime led him willingly to leave the initiative, the preparation and the execution almost entirely to his volcanic colleague, while he himself in full agreement on the largest decisions came in with ponderous weight to clear obstacles and opposition from the path. Throughout the struggle an absolute unity was presented.

But when we look beneath appearances to the facts, there can be no doubt that Ludendorff managed everything and that Hindenburg was chosen largely to enable him to manage everything. It was in Ludendorff's brain that the great decisions were taken. It was under his competent hand that the whole movement and control of the German armies, and of much more than the armies, proceeded. Ludendorff was the man of the German General Staff. This military priesthood was throughout the dominating and driving power of Germany, not only through the fifty-two months of the war, but to a very large extent in the situation that preceded it and brought it about. The representatives of the General Staff were bound together by the closest ties of professional comradeship and common doctrine. They were to the rest of the Army what the Jesuits in their greatest period had been to the Church of Rome. Their representatives at the side of every Commander and at Headquarters spoke a language and preserved confidences of their own. The German Generals of Corps and Armies, Army-Group Commanders, nay, Hindenburg himself were treated by this confraternity, to an extent almost incredible, as figureheads, and frequently as nothing more. 'The General Staff,' writes General von Moser,<sup>1</sup> 'established an underground control of operations behind the backs of the commanding Generals. It led one prominent General to declare, "I am fighting the enemy and the General Staff."' On December 3, 1917, in the Cambrai battle, Moser himself relates that as Corps Commander he suggested to the Second Army the recapture of Bourlon Wood the next day. To his surprise his project was disapproved and the date fixed for the 9th. He subsequently ascertained that one of his own General Staff officers had spoken on the telephone to the Second Army and argued against the attack on the 4th and in favour of postponing it to the 9th.

Every one will remember the extraordinary incident of the visit of Colonel Hentsch to the various Army Headquarters during the

<sup>1</sup> *Ernsthafte Plaudereien über den Welt Krieg.* General von Moser.  
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Battle of the Marne in 1914 as General Staff representative of the Supreme Command ; how on the morning of September 9 he settled all vital matters with Bülow's Chief of the Staff while the old man was still in bed ; and how at noon at Kluck's headquarters he gave his orders to the Staff Officer, Kuhl, and neither mentioned Kluck nor asked to see him. Similarly Generals von Lossberg (C.G.S. Sixth Army) and von Kuhl (C.G.S. Rupprecht's group of Armies) speak always, as the records show, in their own names and not those of Sixt von Armin or Rupprecht, whom they neither quote nor appear to consult. A British Staff Officer, whatever the facts, would at least have said, 'The Chief or Army Commander wishes.' But behind the scenes of the German General Staff all these formalities are dropped. The staffs arrange everything without a word about the authority, opinions or desires of their generals. It is the General Staff which conducts the operations, gives decisions and notifies them to the subordinate formations. Ludendorff throughout appears as the uncontested master. In his numerous conversations with the Chief of the Staff of the Fourth Army, the name of Hindenburg is never mentioned to justify or to support a decision.<sup>1</sup>

This in no way detracts from the fame of Hindenburg, who yielded himself with magnanimity to a process which he was sure was in the best interests of his King and Country. But it is necessary to state what is believed to be the truth.

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The golden opportunity for which Roumania had so long watched had not only come. It had gone.

As soon as the extent of the Russian victory was plainly apparent, the Cabinet of Bratiano definitely decided to enter the war. The long period of perplexity, hesitation, and bargaining had reached its conclusion. Now or never was the moment for Roumania to strike with all her strength for her national ambition and for the unity and integrity of the Roumanian peoples. Once this decision was taken, not a day should have been lost in acting upon it. While Brusiloff's armies were rolling forward in Galicia, while the Bohemian troops of Austria were eagerly surrendering by scores of thousands, while the enormous booty in prisoners, arms and material was being collected by the astonished Russian soldiery, and before the German troops could be drawn from the north and the west to re-establish the shattered front—then was the hour for Roumanian intervention. A general mobilization of the

<sup>1</sup> The above facts are taken from the French translation of the captured documents of the German Fourth Army, 9-30 April, 1918, and from a French review of them.

Roumanian Army, if ordered about June 10, would have enabled considerable Roumanian forces to have come into action before the end of that month and while the whole south-eastern front of the Central Powers was in complete disorder. The consequences of this must have been far-reaching and might perhaps have proved decisive.

The habit of bargaining, of waiting upon events, of trying to make hazard sure and wild adventure prudent, had become so deeply engrained in Bratiano's policy that nearly two months were wasted in negotiations. Before they would commit themselves, the Roumanian Government must have everything settled, must be promised the highest reward and guaranteed a practically complete immunity. Military conventions regulating the contingent movements of Russian troops and of the Salonica armies, and the supply of arms and munitions, not less than the political, financial and territorial issues, were laboriously and meticulously debated by telegraph with the various Allied Cabinets. The British and French Governments—high in their hopes of impending victory on the Somme—were suddenly eager to secure Roumanian aid at almost any price. Russia, for reasons which will presently be understood, appeared less ardent. Yet it was with Russia that all the principal military arrangements had perforce to be settled. In these discussions the rest of June and the whole of July slipped rapidly away.

Meanwhile Falkenhayn was not idle. Everywhere in the east the German troops stood immovable against the Russians, and from all parts of the German lines reinforcements were scraped together and hurried to the scene of Brusiloff's incursion. By the end of June the Russian advance had slackened, and by the middle of July the Austro-German front was again continuous and more or less stabilized. The gravest apprehensions upon the attitude of Roumania were justly entertained in Vienna, Berlin and Sofia. And during June and July Austrian and Bulgarian forces were steadily and to the fullest extent possible brought into precautionary positions near the Roumanian frontiers.

It was not until August 27 that Roumania declared war on Austria-Hungary, ordered general mobilization and prepared to launch her armies into Transylvania. She had exacted the following military stipulations from the Allies: first, energetic action by the Russians against the Austrians, particularly in the Bukovina; secondly, two Russian divisions and a cavalry division to be sent on the first day of mobilization into the Dobruja; and thirdly, an offensive by the Allies from Salonica simultaneously with the Roumanian entry into the war.

Not all these measures and their political counterparts put together were worth the month or six weeks of precious time that

had been lost in their discussion. Prudence had become imprudence, and safety had been jeopardized by care and forethought. The Teutonic Powers had escaped from the ruin with which the Brusiloff disaster had menaced them before they were called upon to bear the assault of a new antagonist. And this assault was no longer unexpected, but foreseen and so far as their resources allowed prepared against. Nevertheless the apparition in the field of Roumania with twenty-three organized divisions and with over 1,500,000 men capable of bearing arms, and the denial of the Roumanian supplies of corn and oil, seemed both to friend and foe to constitute at this moment one of the most terrible blows which Germany and her reclining partner had yet been called upon to encounter.

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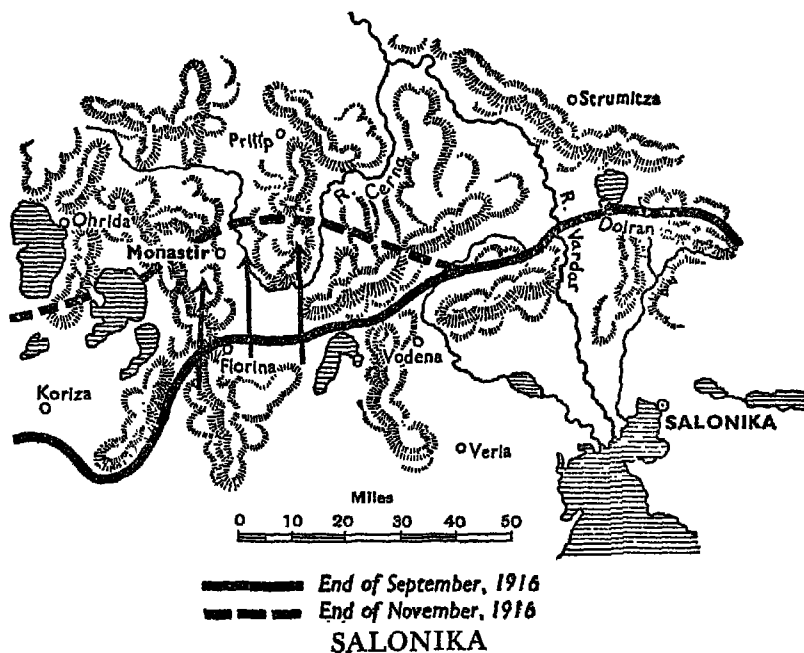
While the German and Bulgarian storm-clouds are gathering around Roumania, we must examine the situation on the Salonica front, from which Roumania had been led to expect timely and immediate succour.

The presence of the Allied Army based on Salonica was one of the determining factors in the decision of Roumania. Nearly 400,000 men of five nations—French, British and Serbian, an Italian division and a Russian Brigade—were now scattered along and behind the front established at the foot of the Bulgarian mountain wall. Roumania had stipulated that this army should begin a general offensive against the Bulgarians, if possible a fortnight before, and at the worst simultaneously with, her entry into the war. Both the British and French Governments had agreed to this. Accordingly on Joffre had fallen the duty of ordering General Sarrail who commanded the Allied Army to set his forces in motion not later than August 10. 'At the moment which is judged opportune the Army of the Orient will attack, with all forces united, the Allied enemy along the Greek frontier, and in case of success will pursue them in the general direction of Sofia.' This ambitious command did not correspond with the realities. The British Commander-in-Chief, General Milne, reported that an offensive against the Bulgarians would not succeed. He thought that determined troops could hold the Bulgarian position for ever. The extent of the front, the lack of adequate forces, the difficulties of co-operation between three nationalities, the doubtful quality of the Serbians on the exposed left flank, and the inadequate heavy artillery were among the adverse points on which he dwelt. Sir William Robertson recorded his opinion that the Bulgarians were fine fighters in their own country, that the Serbians had not recovered from their disaster, and that not a single British officer was in favour of



the enterprise. The British Government had no confidence in General Sarrail, and friction was continuous between him and his British colleagues.

These pessimistic views were not entirely justified by the subsequent facts. The Serbians, after reorganization, training and feeding, showed themselves when the time came implacable troops. But it is remarkable that the British Cabinet, in the face of the reports submitted to them, should nevertheless have joined with the French in encouraging Roumania to count upon an effective offensive by the Salonica Army. There was indeed no means by which the Allied forces in the Balkans could



prevent Bulgaria from throwing her main strength against Roumania. In the upshot it was arranged that General Milne with the British should guard Sarrail's right flank in an active defensive, while Sarrail himself was forced to reduce the general offensive ordered by Joffre to demonstrations and an enveloping attack by the Serbians. Even so he had to feed eight divisions along a single line of railway. On the whole front he could muster no more than 14 divisions against 23 Bulgarian and German divisions fortified on strong mountain lines. The date even of these limited operations was retarded until the end of September. Meanwhile the German-Bulgarians struck first, and

though repulsed elsewhere reached the sea and captured a Greek Division at Kavala on September 18. In the circumstances it was remarkable that Sarrail should have succeeded to the extent of taking Monastir. On the actual front of attack the forces were almost equal ; each mustered 190,000 men and 800 or 900 guns. But the achievement in no way influenced the struggle in which the fate of Roumania was decided. Had all the faults of temperament and character which are charged against General Sarrail been replaced by equally undisputed virtues, no better result could have been obtained.

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The perilous position of Roumania became apparent from the moment of her declaration of war. The main portion of the Kingdom consisted of a tongue of land about three hundred miles long and a hundred wide between the wall of the Transylvanian Alps on the north and the broad Danube on the south. About the centre of this tongue lay the capital, Bucharest. Beyond the mountains gathered the Austrians and the Germans ; behind the Danube the Bulgarians crouched. Four months sufficed to crack Roumania like a nut between these pincers.

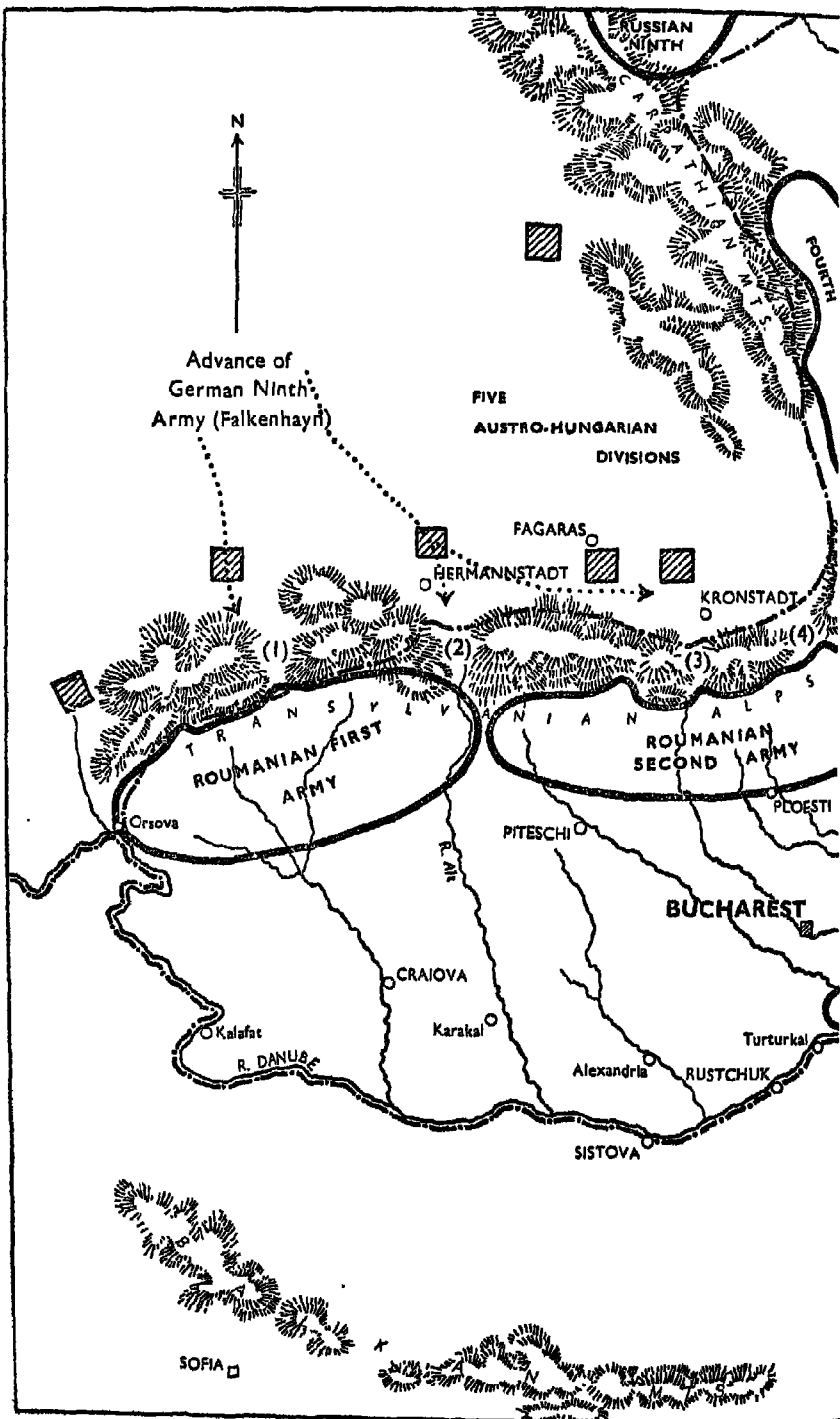
A word may be said about each of the Roumanian frontiers. The Danube, which here flows for a great part of its course through a deep trough in the plain and is in many places nearly a mile wide, appeared a trusty barrier. The principal passages at Sistova, Turturkai and Silistria were guarded by fortresses reckoned formidable before the advent of the heavy howitzer. As the Danube descends to its mouth, it encloses between its waters and the Black Sea the province of the Dobruja which Roumania had at the end of the second Balkan war seized without fighting from prostrate Bulgaria. An advance into the Dobruja, left hand on the Danube, right hand on the seashore, stirred every Bulgarian ambition and cut at the very root of the Roumanian tongue.

The mountain range to the north was a more effective defence than the line of the Danube. The Transylvanian Alps rise to a height of six or seven thousand feet by three tiers of forest, of grassy upland and finally of rocky but rounded summits. This rampart is pierced from north to south by four major passes—sudden clefts two or three thousand feet deep and many miles in length, traversed by inferior roads of which the most westerly is the one which follows the Vulkan pass. The Transylvanian Alps turn at their eastern extremity through more than a right angle into the Carpathians, between which and the Russian frontier on the river Pruth lies Moldavia, the northern province of Roumania. Such was the theatre of the new war.

Roumania mobilized on August 27 twenty-three divisions, of which ten were well trained, five less well trained, and the remainder reserve formations, aggregating over 500,000 men. The Roumanian Army was however weak in artillery and ill supplied with ammunition. Her principal arsenal had exploded mysteriously a few days before her entry into the war. She was ill equipped with field telephones, and possessed very few aeroplanes, no trench mortars and no poison gas. Her Statesmen seem at first to have cherished the hope—fantastic in view of the past—that Bulgaria would not declare war upon her. When this hope was dispelled on September 1, Roumania continued to trust to the intervention of General Sarrail to hold the Bulgarian strength on the Salonica front. She also hoped that the Germans would be too hard pressed to spare any substantial forces, and she relied upon definite promises of strong and prompt Russian aid. The Roumanian forces were divided into four armies, of which the Third guarded the Danube and the Dobruja, the First and Second held the passes through the Transylvanian Alps, and the Fourth, hoping later for co-operation from the Second, invaded Transylvania through the Carpathians. A central Reserve of 50,000 men guarded Bucharest.

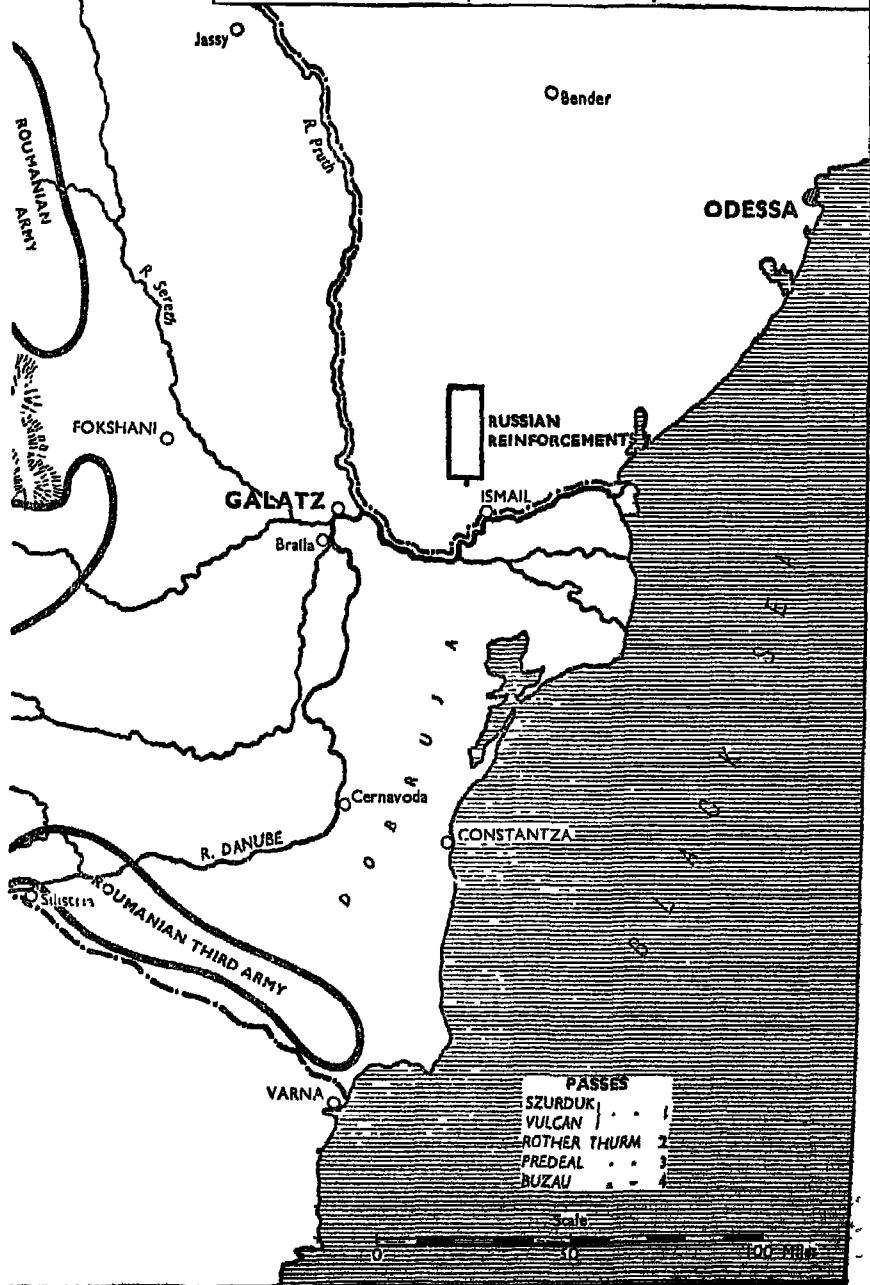
At the outset there were in Transylvania only five tired Austrian divisions, but in the early part of September four German divisions were already approaching. Of these troops Falkenhayn was himself placed in command on September 6. Beyond the Danube and towards the Dobruja three Bulgarian divisions and a cavalry division and part of a German division from the Salonica front were assembled under the redoubtable Mackensen.

Although the Roumanians had a large numerical superiority, it was impossible to study the war map without anxiety. Mr. Lloyd George, then Secretary of State for War, explained to me fully the situation; and after we had mutually alarmed each other in a long talk at Walton Heath, he wrote a serious though belated warning to the Prime Minister. Sarrail and the Salonica army could not be got into motion. There remained only the Russian aid, and here again fortune was perverse. The treaty which the old King of Roumania had made before the war with Austria-Hungary had led Russia to regard Roumania as a potential enemy. In consequence the south Russian railway system withered away towards the Roumanian frontier, and there was actually a gap of twenty miles between the Russian railhead at Reni and the nearest Roumanian line at Galatz. It was therefore impossible for Russia to come with any speed to the succour of her new Ally. Alexeieff and the very able Russian Staff understood the Roumanian problem far better than the impatient



# ROUMANIAN CAMPAIGN 1916

(THE BEGINNING)



western Allies, and their misgivings had been apparent in the lukewarm attitude of Russia towards Roumanian intervention.

Jubilation at the accession of a new Ally was still resounding through the French and British Press when startling news arrived. On September 1 Mackensen invaded the Dobruja. On September 6, with the Bulgarian Army and German howitzers he smashed the Danubian fortress of Turturkai and captured 25,000 Roumanians and 100 guns. Swiftly advancing through the Dobruja, Mackensen had by the end of September come almost abreast of Constanza on the Black Sea, taking the abandoned fortress of Silistria on his way. By the third week in October he had taken Constanza. Leaving half his army to defend the conquered territory by an entrenched line from the Danube to the sea, he brought the remainder, strengthened by a Turkish division and an additional Bulgarian division, across the Danube opposite Bucharest, which he threatened at a distance of barely forty miles. This menace was not without its object. While the Bulgarian invasion of the Dobruja had been proceeding, Falkenhayn was probing the passes of the Transylvanian Alps and seeking incessantly—now here, now there—to force his way through. The First and Second Roumanian armies however maintained a stout resistance, while the Fourth, which had debouched from the Carpathians, continued to drive the Austrians westward. But the disaster at Turturkai, the invasion of the Dobruja, and finally Mackensen's menace to Bucharest, had already absorbed the Roumanian central reserve of 50,000 men. General Averescu, placed in command of the southern front, peremptorily demanded that the Roumanian Fourth Army should be recalled from Transylvania, that the Second and Third Armies should be reduced to the minimum compatible with holding the passes, and that the whole strength of Roumania should be thrown against the Bulgarians. This at any rate was a military plan. It was resisted with equal vehemence by General Présan who commanded in the north. The controversy was acute, and the debate well balanced. In the end, as would be expected a compromise was reached whereby General Présan continued to invade Transylvania with forces too weak to be effective; and General Averescu obtained enough troops from the armies holding the passes to endanger the defence, but not enough to overcome the Bulgarians.

Roumania had now been at war for two months, and by the beginning of November five additional German divisions and two cavalry divisions had joined Falkenhayn's army. Thus powerfully reinforced, he attacked the Vulkan pass in earnest. By November 26 he had forced his way through and entered the Roumanian plain, descending the valley of the Jiu and incidentally cutting off

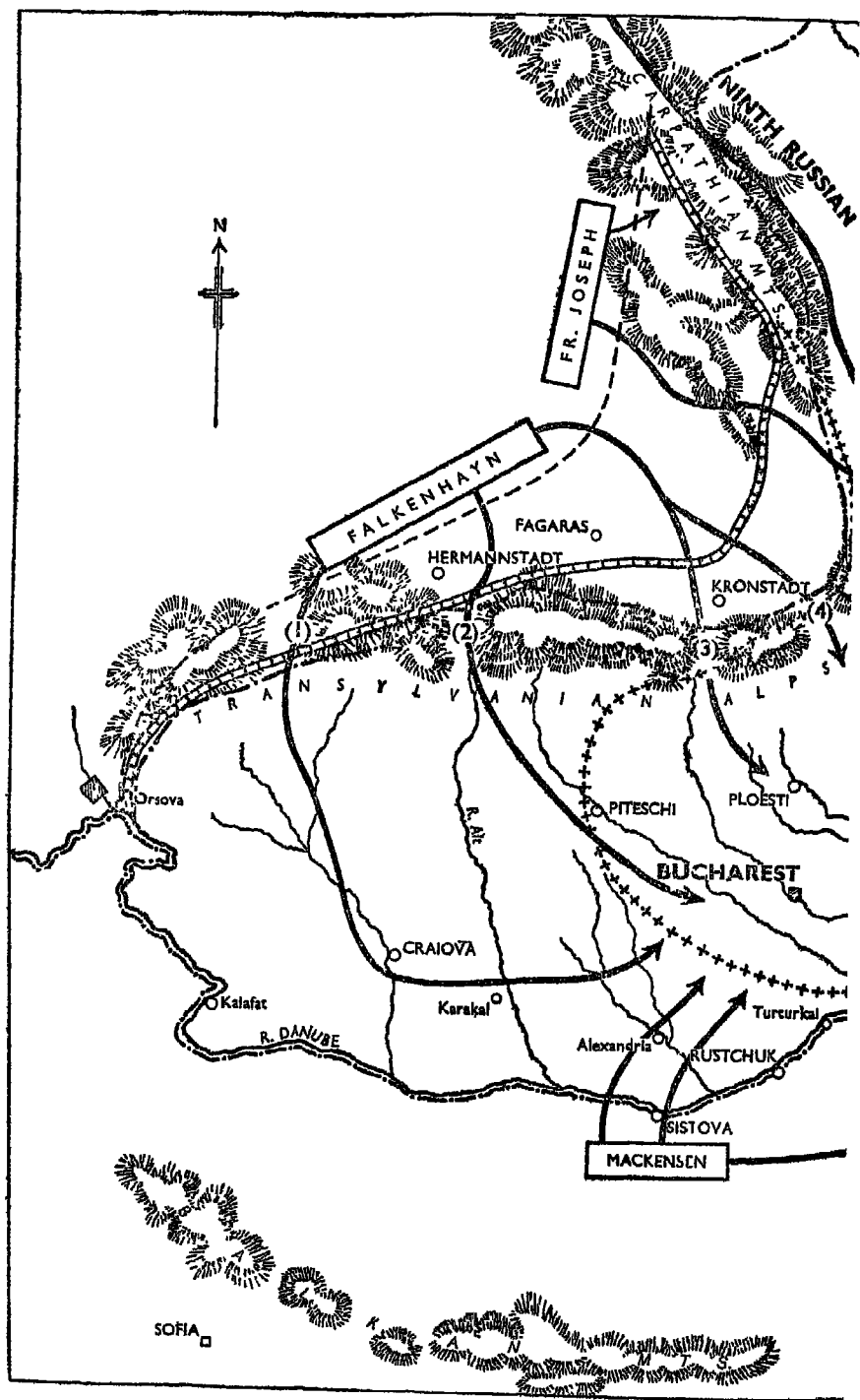
the Roumanian forces holding the tip of the tongue near Orsova. This movement compromised in succession the defence of the other passes. By the end of November, Falkenhayn had joined hands with Mackensen from across the Danube; and on December 6, after a well-contested three-days' battle between Falkenhayn's and Mackensen's armies, together amounting to fifteen divisions, and what was left of the Roumanian forces, he entered Bucharest in triumph. The Roumanians, defending themselves stubbornly, retreated eastward towards the considerable Russian Army which had now at last arrived. Notwithstanding torrential rains and winter conditions, Falkenhayn and Mackensen followed apace. The roads ceased to exist. The troops were short of food and every necessity. Ludendorff, according to Falkenhayn, sent 'floods of telegrams, as superfluous as they were unpleasant,'<sup>1</sup> but neither winter clothing nor supplies. Still the Germans persevered, and after a series of stern battles mainly against Russian forces, reached the Sereth River on January 7. Here their advance ended. The tongue of Roumania had been torn out by its roots. There remained of that unhappy Kingdom only the northern province. In this narrow region around the town of Jassy what remained of the armies which four months before had entered the war so full of hope endured for many months privation and even famine, from which not only thousands of soldiers but far larger numbers of refugees perished lamentably. Thus did Roumania share in the end the hideous miseries of all the Balkan peoples.

How unteachable, how blinded by their passions are the races of men! The Great War, bringing tribulation to so many, offered to the Christian peoples of the Balkans their supreme opportunity. Others had to toil and dare and suffer. They had only to forgive and to unite. By a single spontaneous realization of their common interests the Confederation of the Balkans would have become one of the great Powers of Europe, with Constantinople, under some international instrument, as its combined capital. A concerted armed neutrality followed by decisive intervention at the chosen moment against their common enemies, Turkey and Austria, could easily have given each individual State the major part of its legitimate ambitions, and would have given to all safety, prosperity and power. They chose instead to drink in company the corrosive cup of internecine vengeance. And the cup is not yet drained.

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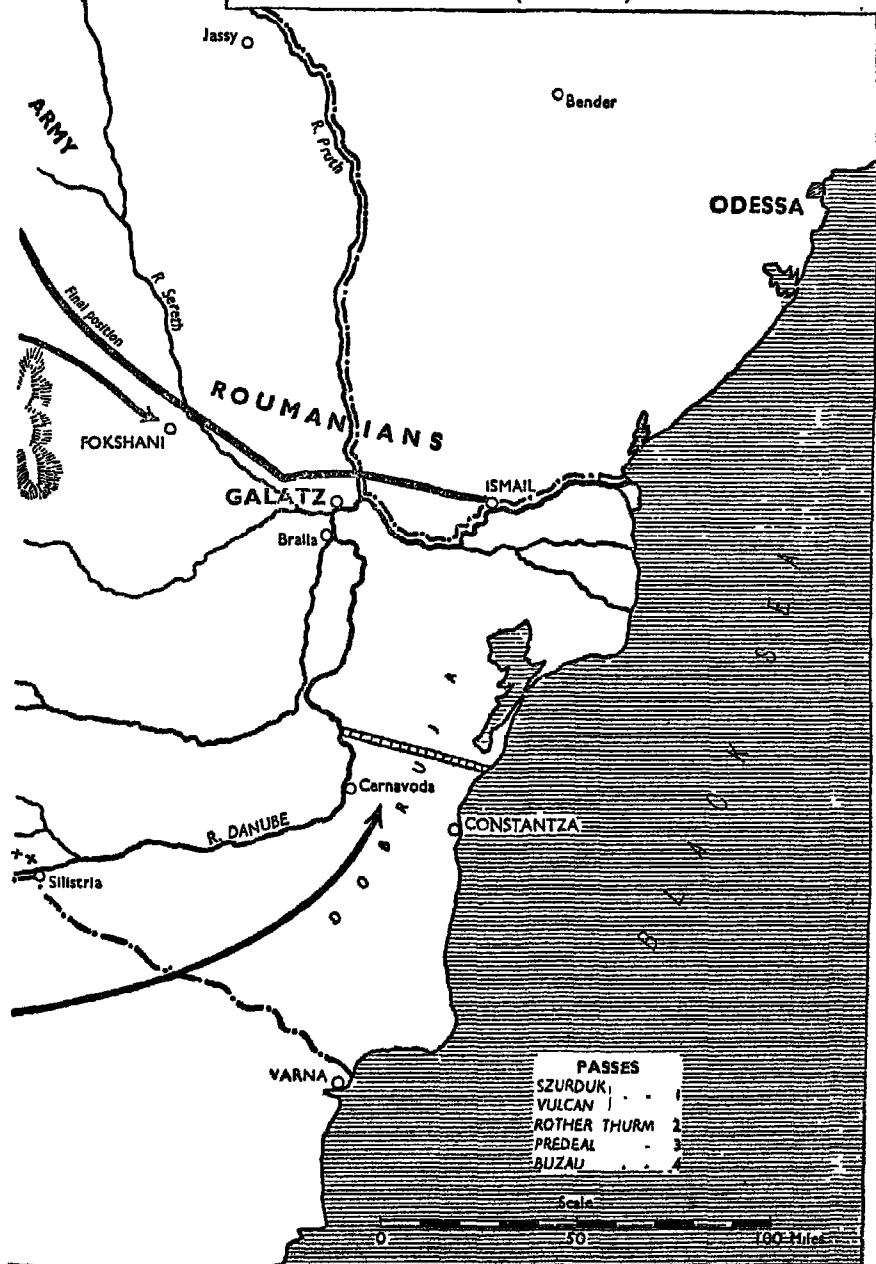
Meanwhile on the heights of Verdun new figures destined powerfully to sway the course of events began to emerge under

<sup>1</sup> *Der Feldzug der 9. Armee, 1916-17, Part II, pp. 93-100.*





# ROUMANIAN CAMPAIGN 1916 (THE END)



the blast of the cannonade. Pétain's most successful commander was a certain General Nivelle, an Artillery officer who by courage and address had won his way from a modest station to the head of an Army Corps. Nivelle's fighting arm was a certain General Mangin, of whom some brief description is required. Mangin belonged to the French Colonial Army, and had made his name in Morocco and Tunis. He had led Marchand's advanced guard to Fashoda in 1898. Engaged at the head of a brigade in the opening days of the war, he had won distinction at Dinant and Charleroi. In the widespread breaking of incompetent leaders which followed the opening defeats of the French Army, Mangin succeeded to the command of a dispirited division from whose control a discredited figure had been removed. 'After having at our head,' wrote a young Royalist who served as a clerk on the staff of this division, 'a walking ruin, we actually possess one of the best generals of the French Army.'<sup>1</sup> Mangin was not to belie this reputation. Bronzed and sombre, thick black hair bristling, an aquiline profile with gleaming eyes and teeth; alive and active, furious, luxurious, privileged, acquisitive—a dozen motor-cars collected from all quarters, including the enemy, in his train as a simple Colonel of Brigade—reckless of all lives and of none more than his own. charging at the head of his troops, fighting rifle in hand when he could escape from his headquarters, thundering down the telephone implacable orders to his subordinates and when necessary defiance to his superiors, Mangin beaten or triumphant, Mangin the Hero or Mangin the Butcher as he was alternately regarded, became on the anvil of Verdun the fiercest warrior-figure of France.

During the spring Pétain entrusted the direction of the most important operations to Nivelle, and Nivelle confided their execution in the main to Mangin. When in April after three months of battle Pétain was promoted from Verdun to the command of a group of armies, Nivelle, Mangin still in hand, succeeded to the direction of the struggle.

One of the earliest decisions of the Hindenburg-Ludendorff régime had been to arrest the Verdun offensive; and from the end of August, to the intense relief of the Crown Prince, the German armies before the fortress adopted a purely defensive attitude. The decision, wise in the disastrous circumstances, presented nevertheless a fine opportunity to the French. The long months of battle had left the German line wedge-shaped. The fort of Douaumont, in actual contact at the very tip, was at once the greatest and the nearest trophy for France. Nothing would set the seal of defeat upon the German effort at Verdun more dramatic-

<sup>1</sup> *De Sauret la Honte, et Mangin le Boucher.* Henry Duthell, p. 88.

ally than the recapture of Douaumont, famous all over the world. It was on this that Nivelle and Mangin set their hearts.

The preparations were long and thorough. 530 heavy pieces, including a new 16-inch Creusot battery, in addition to the ordinary artillery of the Verdun army, were concentrated upon the German salient—or a gun to every fifteen yards of the front to be attacked. The three divisions which were to make the assault were brought to the highest point of strength and efficiency and trained for more than a month behind the line in the exact parts each was to play. The bombardment began in the middle of October, and fell with fury on all the German defences and organizations. The chief target was the German artillery. By the 20th nearly a third of the German batteries had been put out of action. On the 22nd, at 2 p.m., the French fire on the German front lines was suddenly lifted and the range lengthened. The stratagem was successful. Here then, thought the Germans, was the moment of assault. 158 German batteries, hitherto concealed, opened fire, betraying alike their own position and their system of defensive barrages. Of these 158 batteries only 90 remained in action when the true moment arrived.

Three fine days preceded the 24th of October, but on the day itself a dense fog overspread the ground. There was a moment of discussion at the French headquarters whether the attack should be postponed. But Mangin rightly judged that the fog hampered the defence at least as much as the attack. His view prevailed. The French trench mortars, secretly massed on an unprecedented scale—a new feature—opened a terrific fire on the German front line crouching in the shell holes to which their trenches were reduced; and after two hours the French infantry, in the cold passion of calculation and devotion, marched upon their ancient foe. In two hours more all was over. The German wedge was bitten off, the tricolour flew again upon Fort Douaumont, and 6,000 German prisoners were in Mangin's cages. The 'corner-stone' of Verdun, as the Germans had precipitately called it, had been regained; and the name of Verdun was registered in history as one of the greatest misfortunes of the German arms.

In this brilliant local victory there lay, as will soon be seen, the seeds of a memorable disappointment.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNITED STATES

*Whereas the Imperial German Government have committed repeated acts of war against the Government and the people of the United States of America: Therefore be it resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled: That a state of war between the United States and the Imperial German Government which has been thrust upon the United States is hereby formally declared; and that the President be, and he is hereby authorized and directed to employ the entire naval and military forces of the United States and the resources of the Government to carry on war against the Imperial German Government; and to bring the conflict to a successful termination all the resources of the country are hereby pledged by the Congress of the United States.*—Congressional Resolution of April 6, 1917.

Three Stupendous Events—Three Cardinal Mistakes—The U-boats and the Traditions of Sea Warfare—The German Logic—Tirpitz's Premature U-boat Attack—Its Repulse and British Counter-measures—The Chancellor restrains Tirpitz—The Winter Situation in Germany—Two Hundred U-boats—The Dire Decision—'If Victory Beckons'—The Fate of Russia—Her Amazing Recovery—Nicholas II—Limitations of the German Military Outlook—The Value of American Intervention—The American Standpoint—The Rigid Constitution—President Wilson—His Problems—His Efforts to abstain from War—Increasing Provocation—The final Rupture—America at War.

THE beginning of 1917 was marked by three stupendous events: the German declaration of unlimited U-boat war, the intervention of the United States, and the Russian revolution. Taken together these events constitute the second great climax of the war. The order in which they were placed was decisive. If the Russian revolution had occurred in January instead of in March, or if, alternatively, the Germans had waited to declare unlimited U-boat war until the summer, there would have been no unlimited U-boat war and consequently no intervention of the United States. If the Allies had been left to face the collapse of Russia without being sustained by the intervention of the United States, it seems certain that France could not have survived the year, and the war would have ended in a Peace by negotiation or, in other words, a German victory. Had Russia lasted two months less, had Germany refrained for two months more, the whole course of events would have been revolutionized. In this sequence we discern the footprints of Destiny. Either Russian endurance

or German impatience was required to secure the entry of the United States, and both were forthcoming.

The total defeat of Germany was due to three cardinal mistakes: the decision to march through Belgium regardless of bringing Britain into the war; the decision to begin the unrestricted U-boat war regardless of bringing the United States into the war; and thirdly, the decision to use the German forces liberated from Russia in 1918 for a final onslaught in France. But for the first mistake they would have beaten France and Russia easily in a year; but for the second mistake they would have been able to make a satisfactory peace in 1917; but for the third mistake they would have been able to confront the Allies with an unbreakable front on the Meuse or on the Rhine, and to have made self-respecting terms as a price for abridging the slaughter. All these three errors were committed by the same forces, and by the very forces that made the military strength of the German Empire. The German General Staff, which sustained the German cause with such wonderful power, was responsible for all these three fatal decisions. Thus nations as well as individuals come to ruin through the over-exercise of those very qualities and faculties on which their dominion has been founded.

However long the controversy may last, there will never be any agreement between the belligerent nations on the rights or wrongs of the U-boat warfare. The Germans never understood and never will understand, the horror and indignation with which their opponents and the neutral world regarded their attack. They believed sincerely that the outcry was only hypocrisy and propaganda. The law and custom of the sea were very old. They had grown up in the course of centuries, and although frequently broken in the instance, had in the main stood the stress of many bitter conflicts between nations. To seize even an enemy merchant ship at sea was an act which imposed strict obligations on the captor. To make a neutral ship a prize of war stirred whole histories of international law. But between taking a ship and sinking a ship was a gulf. The captor of a neutral ship at sea had by long tradition been bound to bring his prize into harbour and judge her before the Prize Courts. To sink her incontinently was odious; to sink her without providing for the safety of the crew, to leave that crew to perish in open boats or drown amid the waves was in the eyes of all seafaring peoples a grisly act, which hitherto had never been practised deliberately except by pirates. Thus old seagoing nations, particularly Britain, France, Holland, Norway and the United States, saw in the U-boat war against merchant ships, and particularly neutral merchant ships, depth beyond depth of enormity. And indeed the spectacle of helpless merchant seamen, their barque shattered and foundering, left with

hard intention by fellow-mariners to perish in the cruel sea, was hideous.

But the Germans were new-comers on salt water. They cared little for all these ancient traditions of seafaring folk. Death for them was the same in whatever form it came to men. It ended in a more or less painful manner their mortal span. Why was it more horrible to be choked with salt water than with poison gas, or to starve in an open boat than to rot wounded but alive in No Man's Land? The British blockade treated the whole of Germany as if it were a beleaguered fortress, and avowedly sought to starve the whole population—men, women and children, old and young, wounded and sound—into submission. Suppose the issues had arisen on land instead of at sea; suppose large numbers of Americans and neutrals had carried food or shell into the zone of the armies under the fire of the German artillery; suppose their convoys were known to be traversing certain roads towards the front: who would have hesitated for a moment to overwhelm them with drum-fire and blast them from the face of the earth? Who ever hesitated to fire on towns and villages because helpless and inoffensive non-combatants were gathered there? If they came within reach of the guns, they had to take their chance, and why should not this apply to the torpedoes too? Why should it be legitimate to slay a neutral or a non-combatant on land by cannon if he got in the way, and a hideous atrocity to slay the same neutral or non-combatant by torpedo on the seas? Where was the sense in drawing distinctions between the two processes? Policy might spread its web of calculation, but in logic the path was clear. Yes, we will if necessary kill everyone of every condition who comes within our power and hinders us from winning the war, and we draw no distinction between land and sea. Thus the German Naval Staff. But the neutrals took a different view.

The original driving power behind the U-boat attack on merchant ships was the rasping and energetic personality of Admiral von Tirpitz. We have already seen in Volume I the fate of his first efforts. On February 4, 1915, he had proclaimed that from February 18 onward 'every allied merchant vessel found within the waters surrounding the British Isles would be destroyed without its being always possible to avoid dangers to the crews and passengers,' and that neutral ships would also be exposed to danger in the war zone. At that time Tirpitz had at his disposal no more than twenty to twenty-five suitable submarines, of which only one-third, say seven or eight, could be on duty at a time. Having regard to the enormous traffic and numerous harbours of the British Isles as well as to our defensive measures, we considered it certain that the effects of this attack would be comparatively unimportant to the volume of our trade. I therefore announced

immediately that we would publish every week the sinkings of merchant vessels effected by the German submarines, together with the number of ships entering and leaving British ports. The result fully justified our confidence, and by May, 1915, Tirpitz's failure to impede sea traffic with such puny resources was apparent to all.

The anger of neutrals and the menacing attitude of the United States which the new form of sea warfare aroused, coupled with its feeble results in practice, convinced German Emperor, Chancellor and Foreign Office after the sinking of the *Lusitania* and *Arabic* that Tirpitz was wrong and must be restrained. The operations of the U-boats were accordingly restricted by successive orders and hampered by vacillations of policy, and by the autumn of 1915 they died away altogether. The premature exposure with inadequate forces of this method of warfare was of immense service to Great Britain. Counter-measures of every kind and on the largest scale were from the beginning of 1915 set on foot by the Admiralty under my direction. Armed small craft were multiplied to an enormous extent, both by building and conversion, the arming of merchantmen was pressed forward, the manœuvres of decoy ships—the 'Q-boats,' of which more hereafter—were perfected, and every scientific device, offensive and defensive, against the submarines was made the object of ceaseless experiment and production. The first U-boat attack failed grotesquely, but the counter-measures which had been launched were continued at full speed by Mr. Balfour and his Board all through 1915 and 1916. To this perseverance after the danger had apparently passed away, we owe in great measure our ultimate salvation.

In a speech which I made in the House of Commons while on leave from the front (March 7, 1916) I endeavoured to stimulate these precautions by a definite warning.

'In naval war particularly, you must always be asking about the enemy—what now, what next? You must always be seeking to penetrate what he will do, and your measures must always be governed and framed on the basis that he will do what you would least like him to do. My right hon. Friend (Mr. Balfour) showed that the late Board had surmounted some of the very serious and difficult dangers at the beginning of the War; but one he did not mention, the menace of the submarine attack on merchantmen, was overcome by measures taken this time last year of an extraordinary scale and complexity. But although the German submarine campaign has up to date been a great failure, and although it will probably continue to be a failure—here again you cannot afford to assume that it will not present itself in new and more difficult forms, and that new exertions

and new inventions will not be demanded, and you must be ready with your new devices before the enemy is ready with his, and your resourcefulness and development must continually proceed upon a scale which exceeds the maximum you expect from him. I find it necessary to utter this word of warning, which for obvious reasons I should not proceed to elaborate.'

At this very time in the spring of 1916 Tirpitz renewed his pressure upon the German Chancellor to permit the resumption of the U-boat war. He marshalled all his forces for the assault on Bethmann-Hollweg. General von Falkenhayn was won over. Admiral von Holtzendorf was enthusiastic. Tirpitz himself in his memorandum of February, 1916, wrote:—

'Immediate and relentless recourse to the submarine weapon is absolutely necessary. Any further delay in the introduction of unrestricted warfare will give England time for further naval and economic defensive measures and cause us greater losses in the end, and endanger quick success. The sooner the campaign be opened, the sooner will success be realized, and the more rapidly and energetically will England's hope of defeating us by a war of exhaustion be destroyed. If we defeat England, we break the backbone of the hostile coalition.'<sup>1</sup>

Tirpitz accosted the Emperor aggressively on February 23, 1916, and demanded a decision. The Emperor, who no doubt realized that pressure was being brought to bear upon him and his Chancellor from many quarters, summoned a meeting on March 6, from which he deliberately excluded Tirpitz. As the result of this meeting, at which the Chancellor, Falkenhayn and Holtzendorf were present, it was decided to postpone the opening of unrestricted U-boat war indefinitely. Orders which had been actually issued for beginning it on April 1 were cancelled. Tirpitz immediately requested his dismissal, which was accorded to him on March 17. The conflict was however maintained by the Naval Staff, and by Admiral Scheer.

There were available for a U-boat campaign in the spring of 1916 about fifty suitable vessels as against the twenty to twenty-five of the preceding year. Thus Tirpitz could have maintained less than twenty U-boats in constant action. Having regard to the progress of the British counter-measures, there is no reason to believe that this larger number would have imposed a serious strain upon our oversea supplies. But behind the fifty U-boats in commission no less than one hundred and fifty seven were building within the German financial year 1916. When these were completed by the beginning of 1917, the issue would for the first time

<sup>1</sup> *My Memoirs: Von Tirpitz*, Vol. II, p. 419.



be of a grave character. The attack of twenty-five U-boats in February, 1915, was absurd; the attack by fifty U-boats in February, 1916, would easily have been defeated; but the attack of two hundred U-boats in February, 1917, raised possibilities of a different order. If Tirpitz, exercising almost superhuman foresight and self-control, had made no submarine attack on commerce until at least two hundred U-boats were ready, and had not provoked us to counter-preparations in the meanwhile, no one can say what the result would have been. Happily the remedy increased with the danger. The U-boat menace was taking vast and terrible dimensions, but

'The young disease which shall destroy at length  
Grows with its growth and strengthens with its strength.'

Now however we are coming to the end of 1916, and in the breathing space which winter still affords to warring nations, the German Chiefs haggardly surveyed the deadly scene. In spite of the disasters which had followed Falkenhayn's decision to attack Verdun and to neglect the Eastern Fronts, Germany had survived. She had bled the French at Verdun; she had withstood the British upon the Somme; she had repaired the breach made by Brusiloff; she had even found strength to strike down Roumania, and had emerged from the year's welter with this trophy of victory. But the sense of frightful peril, of increasing pressure, of dwindling resources, of hard pressed fronts, of blockade-pinched populations, of red sand running out in the time-glass, lay heavily upon the leaders of Germany. In the West the Allies were preparing still more formidable blows for the spring; Russian resistance was unweakened; it was even reviving on a scale almost incredible. But for the first time two hundred U-boats were at hand. Would it be possible with these to starve Britain and so, even if war with the United States resulted, 'break the backbone' of the Allies?

'Had we been able,' writes Tirpitz, 'to foresee in Germany the Russian revolution, we should perhaps not have needed to regard the submarine campaign of 1917 as a last resource. But in January, 1917, there was no visible sign of the revolution.'<sup>1</sup>

During November and December the German Chancellor and the Military and Naval leaders racked the Emperor with their contentions:—Whether 200 U-boats in the hand were worth 120,000,000 Americans across the Atlantic: whether Britannia rules not only the waves but the waters underneath them too. Dire issue, exceeding in intensity the turning points in the struggles of Rome and Carthage!

<sup>1</sup> *My Memoirs*: Von Tirpitz, Vol. II, p. 442.

There is no doubt that the responsibility for the decision rests upon Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Tirpitz was gone. He even argues that the moment for ruthless U-boat war had already passed, and records a somewhat hesitating comment of 'Too late.' But Main Headquarters had long been converted to the need of using the U-boat weapon at all costs to the full. In Ludendorff they had found a Chief who shrank from nothing, and upon whose mind supreme hazards exercised an evident fascination. The old Field-Marshal shared or adopted his resolve. He threw his whole weight against the Chancellor. The Admirals chimed in with promises of swift decisive success. The Civil Powers felt the balance turning against them. Their peace overtures had been unceremoniously rejected by the Allies. The stern interchange of telegrams between Hindenburg and Bethmann-Hollweg in the last week of the year marked the end of the Chancellor's resistance. On January 9<sup>1</sup> the decisive conference *à trois* was held at Pless. Ludendorff has published his notes in which the following passages occur:—

*The Chancellor.* When His Majesty orders the intensified submarine operations the Chancellor will endeavour to secure that America will still remain 'out.' Certain concessions—which have been previously discussed with the Naval Staff—must be made. We must, however, reckon on the entry of America into the war. . . . The decision to embark on the unrestricted U-boat campaign is therefore dependent upon the results we expect from it. Admiral von Holtzendorf offers us the prospect that we shall have England at our mercy by the next harvest. The experiences of the U-boats in recent months, the increased number of boats, the bad economic situation of England, certainly form a reinforcement for luck. Taking it all round the prospects of the unrestricted submarine campaign are very favourable. Of course those favourable prospects are not capable of proof. We must be quite clear that, judging by the military situation, great military blows are scarcely likely to bring us final victory. The U-boat campaign is the 'last card.' A very serious decision! *But if the military authorities regard the U-boat campaign as necessary I am not in a position to oppose them.*<sup>2</sup>

*The Field-Marshal.* We are in a position to meet all eventualities, against America, Denmark, Holland and even Switzerland.

The submarine operations in cruiser form have hitherto

<sup>1</sup> The Translation of Ludendorff's: *The General Staff and its Problems*, gives Jan. 1 as the date of this conference. This is a translator's error.

<sup>2</sup> Ludendorff's italics.

brought us only a slightly greater measure of success. We need the most energetic and ruthless action possible. Therefore the U-boat war must begin not later than February 1, 1917. The war must be brought to a speedy end on account of our Allies, though *we* could continue for some time longer.

*The Chancellor.* It is to be remembered that the U-boat war may mean postponing the end of the war.

*General Ludendorff.* The U-boat war will improve the situation even of our armies. The ammunition supply will suffer from the shortage of timber and coal. That means a relief for the troops on the Western Front. We must spare the troops a second Somme battle. Our own experience, the effect of the transport crisis, show that that relief is certain. Moreover, Russia's offensive capacity will be diminished by the shortage of ammunition due to the lack of tonnage. The Siberian Railway will not be enough for Russia by itself.

*The Chancellor.* On America's eventual entry into the war, her help will consist in the delivery of food to England, financial assistance, the supply of aeroplanes and a force of volunteers.

*The Field-Marshal.* We are already prepared to deal with that. The chances of the submarine operations are more favourable than they are ever likely to be again. We can and must begin them.

*The Chancellor.* Yes, we must act if victory beckons.

*The Field-Marshal.* We shall be reproached later on if we let the moment slip.

*The Chancellor.* The position is certainly better than last September.

*General Ludendorff.* The measures we shall take against neutrals are in no way provocative. They are purely defensive.

*The Chancellor.* And suppose Switzerland came into the war or the French marched through that country.

*The Field-Marshal.* That would not be unfavourable, from the military point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Of the meeting at which the Emperor was present later on the same day, the Chancellor has himself left an account.<sup>2</sup>

'Early in January (1917) I was summoned to G.H.Q. When I arrived in Pless on the morning of the 9th, the decision had *de facto* already been made. The Supreme Command and the Admiral Staff were determined on their part to have U-boat warfare. The Kaiser ranged himself on their side. Compared with the Spring and Summer of 1916, when I had prevented U-boat warfare, the situation had completely altered. Then

<sup>1</sup> *The General Staff and its Problems*; Ludendorff. Vol. I, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> Bethmann-Hollweg: *Betrachtungen über den Weltkrieg*. Part II, pp. 131-7.

my opinion had prevailed, because the authority of General von Falkenhayn, in view of the obviously insufficient number of U-boats, had not been great enough to impose a measure which, although it was popular in the circles influenced by the Conservatives, National Liberals and the Navy, was still regarded with scepticism by the majority of the Reichstag. . . .

With all these considerations in my head, I went to the common audience with the Kaiser on the evening of the 9th January. There right away I found the general atmosphere just as laden as in a conference I had had alone with the Supreme Command at midday. I had the feeling that I had before me men who no longer had any inclination to be diverted by persuasion from their already settled decisions. Admiral Staff and O.H.L.<sup>1</sup> put forward their demands. I declared that I could not throw doubt on the military opinion that the war could not be brought to a successful end by action on land alone. Certain success of the U-boat war, in my opinion, could be just as little proved as certain failure. If success was denied then the worst of all ends stood before us. I must appreciate American help higher than the O.H.L. put it. After the reply of the Entente to our Peace offer I could not for the moment indicate any prospect of peace negotiations. In view of the condition of affairs and of the declaration of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, made with the full weight of responsibility, that our military situation permitted us to take the risk of the certain imminent breach with America, I was not in a position to advise H.M. to oppose himself to the vote of his military counsellors. The decision was then made. In about half an hour the audience with the Kaiser, which was no longer a council, came to an end. *Next day O.H.L. advised the Kaiser to change his Chancellor at once.*<sup>2</sup>

His capitulation had availed him nothing. It would have been better before history to have gone down with flag flying. No one can doubt what his convictions were, and we now know that they were right. Events forthwith began their new course.

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Surely to no nation has Fate been more malignant than to Russia. Her ship went down in sight of port. She had actually weathered the storm when all was cast away. Every sacrifice had

<sup>1</sup> The German G.H.Q. (Grosses Haupt-Quartier), Great Headquarters, was the Kaiser's Headquarters—political, naval and military. O.H.L. (Oberste Heeresleitung), the supreme command of the German Field Army, sometimes translated 'the Supreme Command' or 'the Main Headquarters,' was the military section of the German G.H.Q. Its head was the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army.

<sup>2</sup> My italics.—W. S. C.

been made; the toil was achieved. Despair and Treachery usurped command at the very moment when the task was done.

The long retreats were ended; the munition famine was broken; arms were pouring in; stronger, larger, better equipped armics guarded the immense front; the depôts overflowed with sturdy men. Alexeieff directed the Army and Koltchak the Fleet. Moreover, no difficult action was now required: to remain in presence: to lean with heavy weight upon the far-stretched Teutonic line: to hold without exceptional activity the weakened hostile forces on her front: in a word, to endure—that was all that stood between Russia and the fruits of general victory. Says Ludendorff, surveying the scene at the close of 1916:

‘Russia, in particular, produced very strong new formations, divisions were reduced to twelve battalions, the batteries to six guns; new divisions were formed out of the surplus fourth battalions and the seventh and eighth guns of each battery. This reorganization made a great increase of strength.’<sup>1</sup>

It meant in fact that the Russian Empire marshalled for the campaign of 1917 a far larger and better equipped army than that with which she had started the war. In March the Czar was on his throne; the Russian Empire and people stood, the front was safe, and victory certain.

It is the shallow fashion of these times to dismiss the Czarist régime as a purblind, corrupt, incompetent tyranny. But a survey of its thirty months’ war with Germany and Austria should correct these loose impressions and expose the dominant facts. We may measure the strength of the Russian Empire by the battering it had endured, by the disasters it had survived, by the inexhaustible forces it had developed, and by the recovery it had made. In the Government of States, when great events are afoot, the leader of the nation, whoever he be, is held accountable for failure and vindicated by success. No matter who wrought the toil, who planned the struggle, to the supreme responsible authority belongs the blame or credit for the result.

Why should this stern test be denied to Nicholas II? He had made many mistakes, what ruler had not? He was neither a great captain nor a great prince. He was only a true, simple man of average ability, of merciful disposition, upheld in all his daily life by his faith in God. But the brunt of supreme decisions centred upon him. At the summit where all problems are reduced to Yea or Nay, where events transcend the faculties of men and where all is inscrutable, he had to give the answers. His was the function of the compass-needle. War or no war? Advance or retreat?

<sup>1</sup> Ludendorff, Vol. I, p. 305.

Right or left? Democratize or hold firm? Quit or persevere? These were the battlefields of Nicholas II. Why should he reap no honour from them? The devoted onset of the Russian armies which saved Paris in 1914; the mastered agony of the munitionless retreat; the slowly regathered forces; the victories of Brusiloff; the Russian entry upon the campaign of 1917, unconquered, stronger than ever; has he no share in these? In spite of errors vast and terrible, the régime he personified, over which he presided, to which his personal character gave the vital spark, had at this moment won the war for Russia.

He is about to be struck down. A dark hand, gloved at first in folly, now intervenes. Exit Czar. Deliver him and all he loved to wounds and death. Belittle his efforts, asperse his conduct, insult his memory; but pause then to tell us who else was found capable. Who or what could guide the Russian State? Men gifted and daring; men ambitious and fierce; spirits audacious and commanding—of these there was no lack. But none could answer the few plain questions on which the life and fame of Russia turned. With victory in her grasp she fell upon the earth, devoured alive, like Herod of old, by worms. But not in vain her valiant deeds. The giant mortally stricken had just time, with dying strength, to pass the torch eastward across the ocean to a new Titan long sunk in doubt who now arose and began ponderously to arm. The Russian Empire fell on March 16; on April 6 the United States entered the war.

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Of all the grand miscalculations of the German High Command none is more remarkable than their inability to comprehend the meaning of war with the American Union. It is perhaps the crowning example of the unwisdom of basing a war policy upon the computation of material factors alone. The war effort of 120,000,000 educated people equipped with science, and possessed of the resources of an unattackable Continent, nay, of a New World, could not be measured by the number of drilled soldiers, of trained officers, of forged cannon, of ships of war they happened to have at their disposal. It betokens ignorance of the elemental forces resident in such a community to suppose they could be permanently frustrated by a mechanical instrument called the U-boat. How rash to balance the hostile exertions of the largest, if not the leading, civilized nation in the world against the chance that they would not arrive in time upon the field of battle! How hard to condemn the war-worn, wearied, already outnumbered heroic German people to mortal conflict with this fresh, mighty, and once aroused, implacable antagonist!

There is no need to exaggerate the material assistance given by

the United States to the Allies. All that could be sent was given as fast and as freely as possible, whether in manhood, in ships or in money. But the war ended long before the material power of the United States could be brought to bear as a decisive or even as a principal factor. It ended with over 2,000,000 American soldiers on the soil of France. A campaign in 1919 would have seen very large American armies continually engaged, and these by 1920 might well have amounted to 5,000,000 of men. Compared to potentialities of this kind, what would have been the value of, let us say, the capture of Paris? As for the 200 U-boats, the mechanical hope, there was still the British Navy, which at this period, under the ægis of an overwhelming Battle Fleet, maintained upwards of 3,000 armed vessels on the seas.

But if the physical power of the United States was not in fact applied in any serious degree to the beating down of Germany; if for instance only a few score thousand Germans fell by American hands; the moral consequence of the United States joining the Allies was indeed the deciding cause in the conflict.

The war had lasted nearly three years; all the original combatants were at extreme tension; on both sides the dangers of the front were matched by other dangers far behind the throbbing lines of contact. Russia has succumbed to these new dangers; Austria is breaking up; Turkey and Bulgaria are wearing thin; Germany herself is forced even in full battle to concede far-reaching Constitutional rights and franchise to her people; France is desperate; Italy is about to pass within an ace of destruction; and even in stolid Britain there is a different light in the eyes of men. Suddenly a nation of one hundred and twenty millions unfurls her standard on what is already the stronger side; suddenly the most numerous democracy in the world, long posing as a judge, is hurled, nay, hurls itself into the conflict. The loss of Russia was forgotten in this new reinforcement. Defeatist movements were strangled on the one side and on the other inflamed. Far and wide through every warring nation spread these two opposite impressions—'The whole world is against us'—'The whole world is on our side.'

American historians will perhaps be somewhat lengthy in explaining to posterity exactly why the United States entered the Great War on April 6, 1917, and why they did not enter at any earlier moment. American ships had been sunk before by German submarines; as many American lives were lost in the *Lusitania* as in all the five American ships whose sinking immediately preceded the declaration of war. As for the general cause of the Allies, if it was good in 1917 was it not equally good in 1914? There were plenty of reasons of high policy for staying out in 1917 after waiting so long.

It was natural that the Allies, burning with indignation against Germany, breathless and bleeding in the struggle, face to face with mortal dangers, should stand amazed at the cool, critical, detached attitude of the great Power across the Atlantic. In England particularly, where laws and language seemed to make a bridge of mutual comprehension between the two nations, the American abstention was hard to understand. But this was to do less than justice to important factors in the case. The United States did not feel in any immediate danger. Time and distance interposed their minimizing perspectives. The mass of the people engaged in peaceful industry, grappling with the undeveloped resources of the continent which was their inheritance, absorbed in domestic life and politics, taught by long constitutional tradition to shun foreign entanglements, had an entirely different field of mental interest from that of Europe. World Justice makes its appeal to all men. But what share, it was asked, had Americans taken in bringing about the situation which had raised the issue of World Justice? Was even this issue so simple as it appeared to the Allies? Was it not a frightful responsibility to launch a vast, unarmed, remote community into the raging centre of such a quarrel? That all this was overcome is the real wonder. All honour to those who never doubted, and who from the first discerned the inevitable path.

The rigid Constitution of the United States, the gigantic scale and strength of its party machinery, the fixed terms for which public officers and representatives are chosen, invest the President with a greater measure of autocratic power than was possessed before the war by the Head of any great State. The vast size of the country, the diverse types, interests and environments of its enormous population, the safety-valve function of the legislatures of fifty Sovereign States, make the focusing of national public opinion difficult, and confer upon the Federal Government exceptional independence of it except at fixed election times. Few modern Governments need to concern themselves so little with the opinion of the party they have beaten at the polls; none secures to its supreme executive officer, at once the Sovereign and the Party Leader, such direct personal authority.

The accident of hereditary succession which bring a King or Emperor to the throne occurs on the average at intervals of a quarter of a century. During this long period, as well as in his whole life before accession, the qualities and disposition of the monarch can be studied by his subjects, and during this period parties and classes are often able to devise and create checks and counter-checks upon personal action. In limited monarchies where the responsibilities of power are borne by the Prime Minister, the choice of the nation usually falls upon Statesmen



who have lived their lives in the public eye, who are moreover members of the Legislature and continuously accountable to it for their tenure. But the magnitude and the character of the electoral processes of the United States make it increasingly difficult, if not indeed already impossible, for any life-long politician to become a successful candidate for the Presidency. *The choice of the party managers tends more and more to fall upon eminent citizens of high personal character and civic virtue who have not mingled profoundly in politics or administration, and who in consequence are free from the animosities and the errors which such combative and anxious experiences involve. More often than not the champion selected for the enthusiasms and ideals of tens of millions is unversed in State affairs, and raised suddenly to dazzling pre-eminence on the spur of the moment. The war-stained veterans of the party battle select, after many fierce internal convulsions, a blameless and honourable figure to bear aloft the party standard. They manufacture his programme and his policy, and if successful in the battle install him for four years at the summit of the State, clothed thenceforward with direct executive functions which in practical importance are not surpassed on the globe.*

Like all brief generalizations upon great matters, the foregoing paragraph is subject to numerous and noteworthy exceptions. But President Wilson was not one of them. In all his strength and in all his weakness, in his nobility and in his foibles, he was, in spite of his long academic record and brief governorship, an unknown, an unmeasured quantity to the mighty people who made him their ruler in 1912. Still more was he a mystery to the world at large. *Writing with every sense of respect, it seems no exaggeration to pronounce that the action of the United States with its repercussions on the history of the world depended, during the awful period of Armageddon, upon the workings of this man's mind and spirit to the exclusion of almost every other factor; and that he played a part in the fate of nations incomparably more direct and personal than any other man.*

It is in this light that the Memoirs of Colonel House acquire their peculiar interest. In these pages we see a revelation of the President. Dwelling in the bosom of his domestic circle with the simplicity and frugality of Nicholas II, inaccessible except to friends and servitors—and very sparingly to them—towering above Congress, the Cabinet his mere implement, untempered and undinted in the smithy of public life, and guided by that 'frequent recurrence to first principles' enjoined in the American Constitution, Woodrow Wilson, the inscrutable and undecided judge upon whose lips the lives of millions hung, stands forth a monument for human meditation.

First and foremost, all through and last, he was a Party man. His dominating loyalty was to the great political association which had raised him to the Presidency, and on whose continued prosperity he was sincerely convinced the best interests of mankind depended. We see him in the height of the American war effort, when all that the Union could give without distinction of class or party was lavished upon the Government of the day, using his natural position without scruple or apparent self-examination to procure the return to Congress of only those representatives whose names were on the Democratic ticket. Under his régime there were none of those temporary sacrifices of party rancour which were forced on European countries by their perils. The whole power and prestige of the American nation at war was politically impounded so far as possible by the office holders of the day and the party machine. This bred a hatred among political opponents whose sons were fighting, whose money was poured out, whose patriotism was ardent, which as soon as the fighting stopped, proved fatal to President Wilson and his hopes. Next he was a good American, an academic Liberal, and a sincere hater of war and violence. Upon these easily harmonized impulses there had fallen in intense interplay such of the stresses of the European war as rolled across the Atlantic, and all the internal pressures of American policy. He was confronted with four separate successive questions which searched his nature to its depths. How to keep the United States out of the war? How to win the Presidential election of 1916? How to help the Allies to win the war? and lastly, How to rule the world at its close?

He would have been greatly helped in his task if he had reached a definite conclusion where in the European struggle Right lay. Events like the German march through Belgium, or the sinking of the *Lusitania*, had a meaning which was apparent to friend and foe. They both proclaimed the intention to use force without any limit of forbearance to an absolute conclusion. Such a prospect directly affected the interests and indeed the safety of the United States. The victory of Germany and the concomitant disappearance of France and the British Empire as great Powers must, after an uncertain interval, have left the peaceful and unarmed population of the United States nakedly exposed to the triumph of the doctrine of Force without limit. The Teutonic Empires in the years following their victory would have been far stronger by land and sea than the United States. They could easily have placed themselves in a more favourable relationship to Japan than was open to the United States. In such a situation their views upon the destinies of South America could not have been effectively resisted.

Immense developments of armed force would in any case have been required in the United States, and sooner or later a new conflict must have arisen in which the United States would have found herself alone.

President Wilson did not however during the first two and a half years of the war allow his mind to dwell upon the German use of force without restraint, and still less upon the ultimate consequences of its success. He did not therefore feel that American interests were involved from the outset in the European struggle. He distrusted and repressed those sentiments of indignation which the scenes in Belgium or the sinking of the *Lusitania* aroused in his breast. He did not truly divine the instinct of the American people. He underestimated the volume and undervalued the quality of the American feeling in favour of the Allies. Not until he was actually delivering his famous war message to Congress did he understand where, in the vast medley of American opinion, the dominant will-power of the nation lay and had always lain. Not until then did he move forward with confidence and conviction; not until then did he restate the cause of the Allies in terms unsurpassed by any of their own statesmen; not until then did he reveal to the American people where in his judgment world-right was founded, and how their own lives and material interests were at stake.

The desperate action of the German War-Leaders left him in the end no loophole of escape. On January 31, Germany informed the United States of her intention to begin the unrestricted submarine campaign. On February 3, the German Ambassador at Washington was given his passports, the United States representative at Berlin was recalled, and the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany was announced by the President to Congress. But Mr. Wilson had still another line of defence. He declined to believe that any 'overt act' would follow the declaration of the German intention. On February 26 the virtual arrest of United States shipping through fear of German attack forced him to ask Congressional authority to arm American merchant ships. On February 26, an American ship was sunk and eight Americans drowned. Meanwhile the British Intelligence Service had ascertained that Herr Zimmermann, the German Foreign Secretary, had instructed the German Minister in Mexico to make an alliance with Mexico in the event of war between Germany and the United States, and to offer as an inducement to the Mexicans the United States territories of Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. This document, which dealt also with the possibilities of ranging Japan against the United States, was published by the American Government on March 1. During March four American vessels were sunk with the loss of twelve

American lives. On April 1, the *Aztec* was sunk and twenty-eight Americans drowned. On the 2nd, President Wilson demanded from Congress a declaration that a state of war existed between the United States and Germany.

Step by step the President had been pursued and brought to bay. By slow merciless degrees, against his dearest hopes, against his gravest doubts, against his deepest inclinations, in stultification of all he had said and done and left undone in thirty months of carnage, he was forced to give the signal he dreaded and abhorred. Throughout he had been beneath the true dominant note of American sentiment. He had behind his policy a reasoned explanation and massive argument, and all must respect the motives of a statesman who seeks to spare his country the waste and horrors of war. But nothing can reconcile what he said after March, 1917, with the guidance he had given before. What he did in April, 1917, could have been done in May, 1915. And if done then what abridgement of the slaughter; what sparing of the agony; what ruin, what catastrophes would have been prevented; in how many million homes would an empty chair be occupied to-day; how different would be the shattered world in which victors and vanquished alike are condemned to live!

But anyhow all was settled now. 'A drunken brawl,' 'Peace without victory,' where were these festering phrases on April 2? Amid the clink and clatter of a cavalry escort the President has reached the Senate. He is reading his message to Congress and to mankind. Out roll the famous periods in which the righteousness of the Allied cause was finally proclaimed.

'Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with safe-conduct through the proscribed areas by the German Government itself, and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion or of principle. . . . The peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. . . . The world must be made safe for Democracy. . . . The right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things we have always carried nearest our hearts—for Democracy, for the

rights of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free people as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.'

In response to all of this the House of Representatives on April 6 resolved that a state of war was formally declared, and that 'to bring the conflict to a successful termination all the resources of the country are hereby pledged by the Congress of the United States.'

From the Atlantic to the Pacific the call was answered and obeyed. Iron laws of compulsory service, reinforced by social pressures of mutual discipline in which the great majority of the population took part, asserted an instantaneous unity of opinion. No one stood against the torrent. Pacifism, indifference, dissent, were swept from the path and fiercely pursued to extermination; and with a roar of slowly gathered, pent-up wrath which overpowered in its din every discordant yell, the American nation sprang to arms.

## CHAPTER X

### A POLITICAL INTERLUDE

The Coalition Government in 1915—The Conscription Issue—The War Policy Committee's Report—Mr. Asquith and Lord Kitchener—Temporizing in Peace and War—The Conscription Crises of January and April, 1916—Lord Northcliffe and the Press—The Balance destroyed—Politicians v. Generals—Lord Northcliffe's undue power—Mr. Asquith's imprudent disdain—The rejected remedy—Discontent of the Conservative Party—Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson—A crucial Division—The potential Triumvirate—Lloyd George challenges Asquith—Lloyd George Prime Minister—My Exclusion—The Secret Session—My Survey of the War—Deepening Peril—Lloyd George undaunted—His qualities, energy and resolution.

IT is now necessary to return to those domains of British politics which we quitted after the formation of the Coalition Government at the end of May, 1915. It was then observed that the new Cabinet, although composed of a large number of eminent and upright men, was a cumbrous and unsatisfactory instrument for the waging of a great war. From the outset certain remarkable cleavages and personal currents were apparent. These cleavages and currents did not follow regular Party lines, but responded rather to the shades of temperament and opinion found in every Party. There was the old Liberal school gathered round the Prime Minister, which was reluctant to proceed to drastic domestic measures for the conduct of the war. They were not without their affinities among the Conservatives. This school was deeply impressed with the financial difficulties arising out of the enormous payments we were forced to make to the United States to equip ourselves and our Allies on the greatest scale. They were averse from proceeding to extremes in the industrial sphere in order to procure the greatest output of munitions. Above all, they were opposed to the principle of compulsory service to maintain the armies in the field. It was upon this issue that the main division of opinion and feeling crystallized.

Of course, the counsel of perfection at the outbreak of a life-and-death struggle would have been for Parliament to decree Universal service. In this way the terrible burdens of war could have been justly apportioned throughout the whole nation, and the needs of the fighting services whether in men or material scientifically regulated from month to month. It would not have been necessary

to keep hundreds of thousands of volunteers training with the Colours long before there was a rifle to put in their hands, for fear that at a later date their offer to serve might no longer be forthcoming. But these logical and symmetrical conceptions were not in harmony with the British habit of mind. The psychological moment of the first awful plunge into war was allowed to pass, and in a few weeks we reached a period in which compulsory military service was obviously unnecessary. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers overwhelmed the recruiting offices to fill the army and such military organizations as could be improvised beyond it. Before the first three months of the war were over, it was clear that whatever else Britain might lack, it was not citizens ready to fight in her defence. Indeed, the danger was lest too many should quit the vital industries of the nation for the firing line.

This condition continued until the middle of 1915, but in June and July of that year another phase supervened. The failure of Russia made it certain that the war would last for years. The delivery of rifles, equipment and munitions, and the advance in the training of the Kitchener armies, made possible a large and rapid increase of the British forces actually in the field. The wastage of men grew larger every day. Thirty-five British divisions were already serving on the various fronts, and as many more were steadily approaching readiness at home. Sending a division to the front was like lighting a new lamp which burned away its oil at a remorseless rate; it was like opening a new tap in a cistern. Soon there would be at least seventy such taps drawing unceasingly upon the accumulated store of voluntary effort. Over 3,000,000 men had already come forward freely. They represented all that was best and strongest in the patriotism of the British nation. By the summer of 1915 the outflow was already greater than the intake. The Cabinet Committee on War Policy which sat during June and July saw plainly that armies of seventy divisions, still less of one hundred divisions, could not be maintained in the field during 1916 without entirely new measures. The strict Liberal school, headed by the Prime Minister, favoured a further effort at voluntary recruiting. Most of the Conservative Ministers, supported by Mr. Lloyd George and myself, were convinced that immediate compulsion was unavoidable. It was in this sense that I drew up a report to the Cabinet in July, 1915, which was signed by Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Curzon, Lord Selborne and others. This report had concluded as follows:

' We cannot afford, as in Germany or France, to sweep into the army the great mass of the military manhood of the country. Neither can we afford to take men indiscriminately for military service as they present themselves, without regard to their indi-

vidual services or their usefulness in other spheres. With us the problem is more complex; the quality of the effort must be higher and more varied; the need for control and organization even more vital. Of all the belligerent nations we are the one which can least afford to take a married man of 40 while a bachelor of 25 is idle. It is not wise to take a skilled munition worker for the front while a private domestic remains at home. We ought not to let one district be depleted through its patriotism of the indispensable minimum of agricultural or unskilled labour, while in another the recruiters have made practically no headway. We cannot close whole industries to recruiting even the most suitable men, while in others we sweep every man, even up to the oldest father of a family, into the line of battle. We cannot afford to fill our marching battalions with an undue proportion of men past their prime. We cannot afford to let a military male needed for the army do work which could be done by a woman, a boy, or an older man. Greater efforts in national organization are required to remedy these defects, and thus ensure in all its various forms the maximum development of war energy among our people.'

Lord Kitchener, however, did not support these views. He was rightly proud of the wonderful response which had attended his successive appeals for volunteers. He indulged himself in the belief that his countrymen would give him personally whatever numbers he thought right to demand. He therefore leaned to the side of Mr. Asquith, and turned the balance against the adoption of compulsory service at this time. In September, after the losses of Loos had shown what the strain of 1916 would be, the tension between the two groups in the Cabinet became very acute. So grave indeed did it become that a thorough discussion in full Cabinet would have broken up the Government. Therefore, as sometimes happens, the topic which filled all minds became unmentionable in Council, and many weeks slipped away in deadlock. At last in the middle of October a gathering of nine Ministers, including Mr. Lloyd George and myself, met at Lord Curzon's house and resolved at all costs to bring the question to a head. Confronted with the crisis, the daily aggravation of which was apparent, Lord Kitchener and the Prime Minister together produced a new and far-reaching scheme for what was avowedly the final effort of voluntary enlistment. Lord Derby was brought forward to head this movement, and the scheme was presented to the Cabinet as a decision already taken. By this means the Cabinet crisis, with the long series of resignations threatened on both sides, was for the time being staved off.

There is an extraordinary contrast between the processes of



thought and methods of management required in War and those which serve in Peace. Much is gained in Peace by ignoring or putting off disagreeable or awkward questions, and avoiding clear-cut decisions which if they please some, offend others. It is often better in Peace to persist for a time patiently in an obscure and indeterminate course of action rather than break up or dangerously strain a political combination. Under a popular and democratic form of government, where enormous numbers of people have a right to be consulted, and all sorts of personalities, forces and interests have their legitimate interplay upon the course of public affairs, compromise is very often not merely necessary but actually beneficial. The object in time of Peace is often to keep the Nation undisturbed by violent passions, and able to move forward in a steady progress through the free working of its native energies and virtues. Many an apparently insoluble political problem solves itself or sinks to an altogether lower range if time, patience and phlegm are used. British politicians and Parliamentarians, particularly those called upon to lead great parties, are masters in all these arts, and if after four or five years of power they have succeeded, without provoking crises in the State or divisions among their supporters, in achieving large national objects and enabling public opinion to carry in its own way and its own time important social or political reforms, they justly deserve their place in history.

In War everything is different. There is no place for compromise in War. That invaluable process only means that soldiers are shot because their leaders in Council and camp are unable to resolve. In War the clouds never blow over, they gather unceasingly and fall in thunderbolts. Things do not get better by being let alone. Unless they are adjusted, they explode with shattering detonation. Clear leadership, violent action, rigid decisions one way or the other, form the only path not only of victory, but of safety and even of mercy. The State cannot afford division or hesitation at the executive centre. To humour a distinguished man, to avoid a fierce dispute, nay, even to preserve the governing instrument itself, cannot, except as an alternative to sheer anarchy, be held to justify half-measures. The peace of the Council may for the moment be won, but the price is paid on the battlefield by brave men marching forward against unspeakable terrors in the belief that conviction and coherence have animated their orders.

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It was evident that the Derby scheme could only be a palliative. Although the response was considerable, the maintenance of the armies even on a seventy-division basis through 1916 and 1917,

which must also be contemplated, was in no way provided for. Early in January, under the imperious force of events, the Cabinet crisis renewed itself with violent intensity. And now the grim necessity of facts was reinforced by a movement of a moral character exciting the passions of enormous masses of people. Three and a half million men had volunteered. They were not enough. Were they in virtue of their voluntary engagement to be sent back to the front no matter how often they were wounded? Were elderly, weakly, shattered volunteers to be pressed into the conflict while hundreds of thousands of sturdy youths lived as far as possible their ordinary life? Were the citizens of the Territorial Force or soldiers of the Regular Army whose engagements had expired to be compelled to continue, while others who had made no sacrifice were not even to be compelled to begin? From three and a half million families whose beloved breadwinner, whose hero, was giving all freely to the country's cause—families representing the strongest elements on which the life of the nation depended—arose the demand that victory should not be delayed and slaughter prolonged because others refused to do their duty. At last, at the end of January, Lord Kitchener changed sides and Mr. Asquith gave way. In the end only one Minister, Sir John Simon, resigned from the administration. A Conscription Bill was presented to Parliament and swiftly passed by overwhelming majorities.

The new Act was, however, as might be expected from the internal struggle which had produced it, an unsatisfying compromise. It neither secured the numbers of men that would be needed, nor did it meet the now fierce demand for equalization of sacrifice. In April a new crisis upon the extension of compulsion developed in the Cabinet. The previous struggle had left its marks on both sides, and differences of temperament of a profound character had been revealed between colleagues to all of whom the national cause was equally dear. This time it seemed certain that Mr. Lloyd George would resign and the Cabinet be broken up, and plans were elaborated to form a strong Opposition pledged to the enforcement of extreme war measures.

It was suggested that the Leaders of such an opposition in the House of Commons should be Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Edward Carson, and I was urged from many quarters to take my place at their side. The Scottish battalion I had been commanding for some months in Flanders having been disbanded through the lack of men, I was accorded leave to return to the Parliamentary sphere. In May, Parliament appointed by Statute two Committees of Inquiry into the operations in Mesopotamia and at the Dardanelles, and I found myself immediately involved for nearly a year in a continued and harassing defence of my own responsi-

bilities as set forth on earlier pages of this account. It is from the standpoint of a private member not without information upon secret matters that I record the events of the next twelve months.

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The career of the British newspaper Press in the Great War is a definite part of history. No account which excluded its influence would be true. The fortunes of the Press were also a romance centring round the extraordinary personality of Lord Northcliffe, and no story could present more vivid contrasts of strength and weakness. Never was Press control in any country so effective as in Great Britain during the first six months of the war. To a rigorous Government censorship was added an even more effective internal restraint exerted by the public spirit of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association. Criticism was mute, and facts were selected and presented only in a spirit of confidence and hope.

The first idea of the military authorities was that the Press had ceased to exist with the declaration of war. Not a single Correspondent was permitted with the Fleet or in the zone of the Armies, and the anxious public was expected to be satisfied with the cryptic and jejune communiqués accorded them from time to time by General Headquarters. These conventions were soon shaken by defeat. The zone of the Armies became ragged at the edges. Facts and stragglers streamed backwards preceded and attended by clouds of rumour. Wounded arrived by the thousand from the front. The demand for knowledge of the events which were in progress became insistent. In view of Lord Kitchener's well-known dislike of newspaper Correspondents, I had suggested to him in September, 1914, the institution of an official 'eye-witness' at General Headquarters. The eye-witness<sup>1</sup> plied his skilful pen; but it might have been Mrs. Partington's broom against the flood of truth and rumour which rolled continuously back across the Channel. In the beginning of 1915 a few selected Correspondents were as a great concession allowed with the Army. Meanwhile the nature of the struggle and the inevitable mistakes, misfortunes and losses which scarred its path, affected the position of every leading and responsible actor—military, naval or political. The credit of Governments and Staffs, of Admiralty, War Office and Headquarters, tottered under the rude, violence of the Teutonic attack. Ministers and Commanders, and not less those who aspired to fill their places, became conscious of an enormous latent power capable alike of enforcing action, of deflecting policy, of explaining disaster and of proclaiming success. And behind all lay the nation through whose

<sup>1</sup> Lieut-Col. now Maj-Gen. Sir Ernest Swinton.

united strength the war could alone be waged, ready to give all, but demanding knowledge and guidance. Thus after a brief but total eclipse, the sun of newspaper power began in the spring of 1915 to glow with unprecedented and ever-increasing heat.

In the old Party days when the whole British Press was regimented on one side or the other, its function was healthy and its power modest. Each great Party had its organs, not only in the Metropolis but in every city and town throughout the land. Liberal or Conservative politicians stood on firm ground. To be praised by Press supporters was almost as useful as to be abused by Press opponents. For every act of Government there were a thousand journalistic critics and another thousand champions. But critics and champions alike preached mainly to the converted, and gave to faithful Party followers the music they wished to hear. Blare and counter-blare cancelled each other, and policy could pursue its path with composure.

The national unity which sprang from the war destroyed this equilibrium. All were on one side and the enemy on the other. The whole force of the Press could be thrown against any Government, Minister or policy smitten by fortune. Errors, failures, shortcomings, inevitable when puny men were confronted with the giant torrent of events, found no defenders. The governing instrument was loaded at once with the extremes of support and opposition; and although almost unswerving loyalty to the national cause and universal desire to escape from mortal peril compelled a general restraint, the position of every leading figure became precarious in the highest degree.

Moreover, the truth could not be told; the case could not be argued. The Press, though its information flowed in through a thousand rills, possessed only a partial knowledge of the facts and operative causes as these were known to the Governments; and these Governments themselves only imperfectly apprehended the stupendous problem which they were attempting to solve. Half our mistakes and many of our misfortunes could have been avoided if the great issues of war policy and strategy could have been fought out across the floor of the House of Commons in the full light of day. But this was impossible while the Enemy was the auditor of every discussion and the student of every published report or article. Debate followed by division, that last security of every Minister or Government, was precluded. Arguments were used which could not be refuted, though refutation was easy. Charges were made of which the disproof could not in the national interest be adduced; and the physical carnage of the trenches was accompanied by an odious confusion at home.

A series of absurd conventions became established, perhaps inevitably, in the public mind. The first and most monstrous of

these was that the Generals and Admirals were more competent to deal with the broad issues of the war than abler men in other spheres of life. The General no doubt was an expert on how to move his troops, and the Admiral upon how to fight his ships, though even in this restricted field the limitations of their scientific knowledge when confronted with unforeseen conditions and undreamed-of scales became immediately apparent. But outside this technical aspect they were helpless and misleading arbiters in problems in whose solution the aid of the Statesman, the financier, the manufacturer, the inventor, the psychologist, was equally required. The foolish doctrine was preached to the public through innumerable agencies that Generals and Admirals must be right on war matters, and civilians of all kinds must be wrong. These erroneous conceptions were inculcated billion-fold by the newspapers under the crudest forms. The feeble or presumptuous politician is portrayed cowering in his office, intent in the crash of the world on Party intrigues or personal glorification, fearful of responsibility, incapable of aught save shallow phrase-making. To him enters the calm, noble, resolute figure of the great Commander by land or sea, resplendent in uniform, glittering with decorations, irradiated with the lustre of the hero, shod with the science and armed with the panoply of war. This stately figure, devoid of the slightest thought of self, offers his clear far-sighted guidance and counsel for vehement action or artifice or wise delay. But his advice is rejected ; his sound plans put aside ; his courageous initiative baffled by political chatterboxes and incompetents. As well, it was suggested, might a great surgeon, about to operate with sure science and the study of a lifetime upon a desperate case, have his arm jogged or his hand impeded, or even his lancet snatched from him, by some agitated relation of the patient. Such was the picture presented to the public, and such was the mood which ruled. It was not however entirely in accordance with the facts ; and facts, especially in war, are stubborn things.

Although, as has been described, the Press played only a contributory part in the overturn of Mr. Asquith's Liberal Administration, its power was sensibly increased by the formation of the first Coalition Government. The British Commander-in-Chief had not scrupled to inform Lord Northcliffe of the shell shortage. Lord Northcliffe had not hesitated to publish the facts and to attack, not only the Prime Minister, but Lord Kitchener himself. The furious onslaughts of the Northcliffe Press had been accompanied by the collapse of the Administration. To the minds of the public the two events presented themselves broadly as cause and effect. Henceforward Lord Northcliffe felt himself to be possessed of formidable power. Armed with the

solemn prestige of *The Times* in one hand and the ubiquity of the *Daily Mail* in the other, he aspired to exercise a commanding influence upon events. The inherent instability and obvious infirmity of the first Coalition Government offered favourable conditions for the advancement of these claims. The recurring crises on the subject of conscription presented numerous occasions for their assertion. He was in intimate relation with some of the most powerful Ministers. General Headquarters, both under Sir John French and Sir Douglas Haig, treated him with deference. A spacious chateau—monument of their triumph—accommodated the once-banned War Correspondents, and the group of brilliant writers who represented the British Press were recognized and accepted as an indispensable part of the military machine.

There can be no doubt that Lord Northcliffe was at all times animated by an ardent patriotism and an intense desire to win the war. But he wielded power without official responsibility, enjoyed secret knowledge without the general view, and disturbed the fortunes of national leaders without being willing to bear their burdens. Thus a swaying force, uncertain, capricious, essentially personal, potent alike for good and evil, claiming to make or mar public men, to sustain or displace Commanders, to shape policies, and to fashion or overthrow Governments, introduced itself in the absence of all Parliamentary correctives into the conduct of the war.

No public man was more unaffectedly and consistently disdainful of this new development than Mr. Asquith. Relying on his control of the Liberal Party machine, he believed himself as independent of the Northcliffe Press during the war as Liberal Prime Ministers and Governments had been throughout the political struggles which preceded it. He disliked Lord Northcliffe, despised his activities, and ignored his influence. However majestic this attitude may have been, it did not take sufficient account of the realities of the time. The Liberal forces on which the Prime Minister was wont to rely had been gravely dissipated by the war. Parliament, the necessary counterpoise of the Press, was largely in abeyance. The Platform was occupied solely by propaganda and recruiting. Public opinion was thus deprived of two out of the three great educative influences on which it depends in normal times. A policy of tireless detraction of certain Ministers and the ceaseless favouring of others, pursued month after month amid the convulsive episodes of war and the zealous passions of the agonized nation, was bound eventually to produce results in action.

In these circumstances a Dictator would have offered Lord Northcliffe the alternative of high and responsible office or

honourable captivity until the conclusion of hostilities. Mr. Asquith was no Dictator, but even as a Constitutional Prime Minister he possessed two great and decisive means of self-defence. The first, suggested by Lord Rosebery, was the compulsory conversion of *The Times* by the Government into an official Monitor till the end of the war ; the second was the Secret Session of the House of Commons. Both these measures would greatly have strengthened the hands of the Administration. The former would have afforded them a sure and authoritative means of guiding public opinion ; the second would have bound them to the House of Commons in a comprehending and sympathetic unity. On agreeing to take office in the first Coalition I pressed both these courses upon Mr. Asquith. He did not however adopt either. He took no steps to acquire *The Times*, and only once in his tenure did he resort most reluctantly and half-heartedly to the process of Secret Session. There remained therefore, as the reply to remorseless depreciation, only victory in the field. Victory would have carried all before it, but victory was unprocurable.

To the patriotic vagaries of Lord Northcliffe were added the Party vendettas of the *Morning Post*. This famous newspaper, though at that time possessing only a limited circulation, played an appreciable part in public affairs. Written with extreme brilliancy, sincerely and consistently animated by Party spirit, this organ of the extreme Right persevered in its campaign of detraction, which never rested till it had contributed to driving successively from office every public man, Liberal or Conservative, not associated with its particular school of opinion.

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The conscription crisis of April, 1916, was however averted by further concessions on the part of Mr. Asquith. A new National Service Bill was passed, and Mr. Lloyd George remained in the Government.

During the summer and autumn the Coalition Government had hung uneasily together, racked by many stresses and strains. In these circumstances Mr. Bonar Law, the Leader of the Conservative Party, held the key position and was himself exposed to peculiar difficulties. Opposite to him in the House of Commons sat Sir Edward Carson, with a deeper personal hold in some respects upon the Conservative Party than its titular leader. As the pressure of the war grew, the discontent of the Conservatives with its conduct under a Liberal Prime Minister became steadily more serious, and all this dissatisfaction was focused and directed on the Government by Sir Edward Carson, who though

himself at that time devoid of any administrative record seemed to typify the most vehement and uncompromising war policy in every sphere. Mr. Bonar Law, like Mr. Asquith, was essentially a party man. After joining the coalition he had declared that he would not continue to hold office in the Government if at any time a majority of the Conservative members of the House of Commons voted against it: he would not, that is to say, retain his position in virtue of Liberal votes. Thus the growth of support behind Sir Edward Carson clearly indicated an approaching change. On November 8, Sir Edward Carson raised a debate on the seemingly trivial and irrelevant issue of the sale conditions of some small enemy properties in Nigeria. A resolution was moved declaring that 'such properties and businesses should be sold only to natural-born British subjects or companies wholly British.' The debate, which dealt chiefly with Nigerian Palm Kernels, was marked by the utmost acerbity. A large number of the most influential members of the Conservative party including particularly the Protectionists evinced a marked hostility to the Government. Mr. Bonar Law, as Colonial Secretary, was the Minister directly concerned, and not even his position as a party leader saved him from marked expressions of displeasure renewed in speech after speech with a curious persistency. Stung by this attack from his own friends and supporters, Mr. Bonar Law declared bluntly that the matter was one of direct confidence in the Government, and that Sir Edward Carson no doubt realized the seriousness of the course he was taking. Notwithstanding this the dispute was pressed to a division in which only 73 Conservative Members voted for the Government out of a total of 286, while 65 flatly rejected the appeal of Mr. Bonar Law. This debate and division revealed a depth of hostility to Mr. Asquith's Administration in the Conservative ranks which could not be restrained by the presence of the Conservative leaders in the Cabinet. It was in consequence a danger-signal of the plainest kind. But a complication had arisen. The consistent support which Mr. Bonar Law gave to the Prime Minister had brought him into differences on various occasions with Mr. Lloyd George, the most prominent member of the drastic war-policy group. These differences were exacerbated by the debate and division on Nigerian Palm Kernels. It happened that on that night Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Edward Carson were dining together, and by an accident Mr. Lloyd George was not in the House to support the Colonial Secretary when the division was taken. Thus the two principal personages whose common action was necessary to any decisive change in the Administration were for the time out of touch with each other.

The general misfortune in which the year 1916 closed produced



feelings of disappointment and vexation in the Cabinet which overcame this personal misunderstanding. The failure to break the German line in the Somme battle in spite of the enormous losses incurred, the marvellous recovery of the Germanic powers in the East, the ruin of Roumania brought as it seemed so incontinently into the war, and the first beginnings of a renewed submarine warfare, strengthened and stimulated all those forces which insisted upon the need of still greater vigour in the conduct of affairs. Mr. Bonar Law became increasingly convinced as the rifts in the Cabinet deepened that Mr. Lloyd George's resignation would destroy the prospects of a successful conduct of the war. Forced to choose between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Asquith, he had no doubts where his duty lay. Through the offices of Sir Max Aitken,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Lloyd George came together in the closing days of November in a decision to secure a new and more effective instrument of war direction. The main principle uniting the two Ministers was that the existing Cabinet system whereby the executive heads of the various Departments, each with his special point of view, formed the supreme directing authority, was not adapted to the unprecedented peril of the times. In this view they were of course in full accord with Sir Edward Carson, and thus formed a potential Triumvirate.

But while these general bases of agreement were laid between the two Ministers, no specific method or occasion of bringing the issue to a head presented itself. There was general ferment and unrest in both the schools of policy into which the Government was divided, and an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability betokened the approaching storm. Early in December, Mr Lloyd George, then Secretary of State for War, formally raised the question of the withdrawal of the Prime Minister from the Presidency of the War Committee. He suggested that the political control of the Government and the task of directing the war could not be combined in the hands of a single man, however able or commanding. He proposed that the War Committee should be strengthened by the constant attendance of the Chiefs of the fighting services, that its presidency should be confided to another Minister whose name was not mentioned, but who could in the circumstances clearly be no other than himself; and that the Prime Minister should exercise a general supervision over affairs and retain the supreme political control.

This arrangement was at first not unfavourably entertained by Mr. Asquith. Indeed, if it is studied with attention, it will appear to have contained many features of great advantage to him. Viewing the issue from a detached standpoint, I reached the conclusion, as did Sir Edward Carson, that the position of

<sup>1</sup> Now Lord Beaverbrook.

the Secretary of State for War under it would become one both of difficulty and weakness. On him would fall all the brunt of battling with the naval and military Chiefs, afloat, in the field and at home—now restraining the Generals from their costly offensives, now stimulating the Admirals to make a greater and more aggressive contribution to the waging of the war. Acute differences were certain to develop in both directions between the political and the professional views. The appeal in all cases would have been to the Prime Minister who, free from the friction of the discussions of the War Committee, yet fully informed on every point, would have been able to decide with final authority. On the other hand, Mr. Lloyd George, publicly appointed to preside over the Committee actually directing the conduct of the war, would have been held responsible for every misfortune that occurred, and they were bound to be many. I warned the Secretary of State for War, when he told me what was passing, of these obvious dangers, but he was determined to persist in his course. Friendly interviews with the Prime Minister led to an almost complete settlement. But at the last moment the personal antagonisms which had been latent in the Liberal section of the Cabinet asserted themselves. A leading article in *The Times*, erroneously attributed to Lord Northcliffe, led Mr. Asquith to consider the proposed arrangement derogatory to himself and to his position. He thereupon withdrew his provisional assent, and the Secretary of State for War resigned.

The resignation of Mr Lloyd George led immediately to the fall of the Government. The kaleidoscopic groupings and re-groupings of the Ministerial personages which accompanied this event, will some day form a profoundly instructive chapter in British constitutional history. Mr. Bonar Law felt it would be impossible for him to remain in an Administration from which Mr. Lloyd George had resigned on the ground that the war direction was unsatisfactory. He and—after considerable heart-searchings—most of his friends therefore associated themselves with the Secretary of State for War. The intense passions which the distress and perplexity of the hour aroused on every side made all hope of accommodation impossible. On December 5, Mr. Asquith tendered to the King his resignation and that of his Ministry. Mr. Bonar Law, summoned by the Sovereign, advised that Mr. Lloyd George was the only possible successor. Every effort to induce Mr. Asquith to associate himself with the new Administration was made without success. Followed by all his Liberal colleagues, with the exception of Mr. Lloyd George, he retired into patriotic opposition, and the new Triumvirate of Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson assumed, with what were in practice dictatorial powers, the direc-

tion of affairs. These decisions were not challenged by Parliament, were accepted by the nation, and were acclaimed by the Press.

The new Prime Minister wished to include me in his Government; but this idea was received with extreme disfavour by important personages whose influence during this crisis was decisive. Lord Northcliffe was animated at this time by a violent hostility to me. He made haste to announce in *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* that it had been firmly resolved to exclude from office those who had been responsible for the failures of the war, and that the public would 'learn with relief and satisfaction that Mr. Churchill would not be offered any post in the new Administration.' He also endeavoured—though happily without success—to veto the appointment of Mr. Balfour as Foreign Secretary. Four prominent Conservatives, judged indispensable to the new combination, signed or made a statement stipulating as a condition of taking office that neither I nor Lord Northcliffe should be Ministers. To this extent therefore—though perhaps in a manner scarcely complimentary to himself—Lord Northcliffe received a powerful reinforcement in his view. It could certainly be adduced with validity that my conduct while First Lord was *sub judice* until the Dardenelles Commission had presented its report. Mr. Lloyd George was in no position in these circumstances to resist this oddly combined but formidable cabal. He therefore sent me a message a few days later, through a common friend, Lord Riddell, that he was determined to achieve his purpose, but that the adverse forces were too strong for the moment. I replied through the same channel with a verbal declaration of political independence.

I was of course bitterly disappointed at finding no sphere of action in a Ministry with whose aims and temper I was in the most complete accord. In time of peace political office is often a doubtful blessing, and a man is not seldom happier out than in. But in this World War a great official place, especially one connected with the fighting Services, was perhaps equal in scope to the command of an Army or even a group of armies; and loaded with my special knowledge and share in the whole series of events with which this story is concerned, I found a sentence of continued and indefinite inactivity almost unendurable. I realized however that the Parliamentary situation had been materially changed by the expulsion of Mr. Asquith and the official Liberal Party from the Government. The Opposition benches were now crowded with Members, patriotic and earnest for victory, but nevertheless filled with resentment at the summary manner in which their Leader and their Party had been treated. As a Privy Councillor I still had my seat on the front Opposition

bench, with all the opportunities of intervention in debate which it confers on anyone, and which it confers in special measure on one who has no relations except those of personal courtesy with its other occupants.

My opportunity came in May. Feelings of anxiety and distrust boiled up against the new Government. It must be remembered that apart from Mr. Lloyd George's personal following, which might have amounted to one hundred but was an uncertain quantity, the House of Commons still contained a Liberal, Labour and Irish Nationalist majority of nearly one hundred and fifty. The bulk were definitely hostile to him—for the most part not without reason. A series of appreciable tremors heralded a phase of acute political tension. I therefore advised Mr. Lloyd George, as on a former occasion I had vainly advised Mr. Asquith, to hold a secret Session and take the House fully into the confidence of the Government. It was impossible in public debates, of which the enemy a few days later were readers, either for well-grounded criticisms to be expressed or for the Executive to lay even the outline of their case before the House. I was sure that the Government would emerge from a secret debate in an improved relation to the House as a whole. The absurd rumours and charges with which the Lobbies, the Clubs and the dinner-tables buzzed would be dissipated. Whatever the difficulties, whatever the mistakes, a Government which is sincerely trying its best and is swayed by no Party bias has everything to gain from the fullest statement of its case which the public interest renders possible.

I expressed these views to the Prime Minister through his Whip, Captain Guest, and learned a few days later that he had decided to accept them. A secret Session was announced for May 10. Mr. Asquith and the official Opposition had not asked for such a procedure. They maintained a neutral and a passive attitude in regard to it. It fell therefore to me to open the Debate.

The day came. The Members' and Strangers' Galleries were cleared, but every other part of the House was densely crowded with anxious Members. I was listened to for an hour and a quarter with strained attention, at first silently but gradually with a growing measure of acceptance and at length approval. At the end there was quite a demonstration. A summary of the argument will here serve the purpose of the general narrative.<sup>1</sup>

'A new campaign is about to open. Since the beginning of the year two events have occurred, each of which has changed the whole situation and both of which must be taken into

<sup>1</sup> No record exists of this debate. But from my notes I can reconstruct the outline of the argument.

account in the policy of the Allies. The United States has entered the war, and Russia has collapsed. On the one hand, an Ally Empire whose standing Army comprised over seven million soldiers has been crushed by the German hammer. On the other, a nation comprising one hundred and twenty millions of the most active educated and wealthy citizens, commanding intact and almost limitless resources of every kind, has engaged itself in our cause. But this nation is not ready. It has no large armies and no munitions. Its manhood is untrained to war. Its arsenals and factories, except in so far as they are engaged in producing munitions for the Allies, are unorganized. If time is given, nothing can stand against Great Britain and the United States together. If every Ally fails except these two, they could alone together carry the war against the Teutonic Empires to a victorious conclusion. But a long time will be needed—a time measured not by months but by years—before this mighty force can be brought to bear.

There is one other factor besides time which is vital: Sea Communications. And in this sphere a third new situation of decisive consequence has also developed. When the Germans decided upon the unrestricted submarine campaign, they must have known that they would bring the United States into the war against them. Must they not also have believed that by this same means they would prevent her effective intervention? We do not know, we do not wish to know how many ships are being sunk each week by submarines. We know that the number and proportion is most serious and is still increasing. Here then is the fatal crux. Here then is the first and decisive danger to master. Let the whole energies of Britain be directed upon this point. Let the Navy make of it its great victory in the war. Let every resource and invention be applied. Let the anti-submarine war claim priority and dominance over every other form of British effort. Let us make sure that we can bring the American Armies to Europe as soon as they are fit to come.

Meanwhile what should be our policy on land? Is it not obvious, from the primary factors which have been described, that we ought not to squander the remaining armies of France and Britain in precipitate offensives before the American power begins to be felt on the battlefields? We have not the numerical superiority necessary for such a successful offensive. We have no marked artillery preponderance over the enemy. We have not got the numbers of tanks which we need. We have not established superiority in the air. We have discovered neither the mechanical nor the tactical methods of piercing an

indefinite succession of fortified lines defended by German troops. Shall we then in such circumstances cast away our remaining man power in desperate efforts on the Western Front before large American forces are marshalled in France? Let the House implore the Prime Minister to use the authority which he wields, and all his personal weight, to prevent the French and British High Commands from dragging each other into fresh bloody and disastrous adventures. Master the U-boat attack. Bring over the American millions. And meanwhile maintain an active defensive on the Western Front, so as to economize French and British lives, and so as to train, increase and perfect our armies and our methods for a decisive effort in a later year.'

The Prime Minister replied after a short interval. He accepted in principle my general statement of the main factors. He expressed a great measure of agreement with the argument I had used. But he declined to commit himself against a renewed offensive. Indeed, he gave the impression that such a decision was beyond his power. (Alas, as we shall see, he was already deeply and personally committed.) He then proceeded to lead a captivated assembly over the whole scene of the war, gaining the sympathy and conviction of his hearers at every stage. When he sat down the position of the Government was stronger than it had been at any previous moment during his Administration.

Shortly after his speech we met fortuitously behind the Speaker's chair. In his satisfaction at the course the Debate had taken, he assured me of his determination to have me at his side. From that day, although holding no office, I became to a large extent his colleague. He repeatedly discussed with me every aspect of the war and many of his secret hopes and fears. On the submarine war he was always undaunted. Week by week as April advanced the horrible curve of sinkings crept upwards. To me, then a spectator only, without the anodyne of constant grinding toil, it was torture. If this thin red line plotted on the blue squared paper mounted during May and June at the rate of April, very definite limits would be fixed to our power to continue the war. If it rose at the same or an increasing rate in July, August and September, a peace by negotiation, while enough time and power remained, loomed upon the mind. The position of the British islands and Empire was such that effectual and final interruption of sea communications by any agency meant, not defeat, but destruction. Impotence, starvation, SUBJUGATION, stalked across the mental screen. At the worst of course we had many months of fighting time and strength before us. Had we enough time and enough strength to bring the

American armies into France? The more one knew about the struggle, the more tormenting was the experience.

As the reader has perceived, these pages reveal, no doubt, my unceasing condemnation of the offensives in France in 1917; and I cannot acquit the Prime Minister of his responsibility for not having stopped them. But tragic and costly as were those episodes, they lay in a field of smaller proportions than the struggle with the U-boats. If there was no hope of victory in 1917 for the Allies on land, neither was there any reason to suppose they could themselves be overcome. The great combatants were too equally matched to be able to inflict mortal injury upon each other. Follies, slaughters, heartbreaks—these were the stakes. Ruin was not on the board in France. Her haunt was in the seas.

And it was in facing with unquailing eye these awful contingencies during the opening months of his prime responsibility, that Mr. Lloyd George's greatest service to his countrymen will, I believe, be found by history to reside. Not only undaunted in the face of peril, but roused by each deepening manifestation to fresh energy, he drove the engine of State forward at increasing speed. The War Cabinet shared his burdens. If sometimes this loyal and capable group of men hampered him when he was right, they also furnished him with that environment of sound opinion and solid argument without which his own remarkable qualities of initiative could never have attained full power. They invested him also with a collective authority which rose high and dominating above the fierce pressures of the time.

The new Prime Minister possessed two characteristics which were in harmony with this period of convulsion. First, a power of living in the present, without taking short views. Every day for him was filled with the hope and the impulse of a fresh beginning. He surveyed the problems of each morning with an eye unobstructed by preconceived opinions, past utterances, or previous disappointments and defeats. In times of peace such a mood is not always admirable, nor often successful for long. But in the intense crisis when the world was a kaleidoscope, when every month all the values and relations were changed by some prodigious event and its measureless reactions, this inexhaustible mental agility, guided by the main purpose of Victory, was a rare advantage. His intuition fitted the crisis better than the logical reasoning of more rigid minds.

The quality of living in the present and starting afresh each day led directly to a second and invaluable aptitude. Mr. Lloyd George in this period seemed to have a peculiar power of drawing from misfortune itself the means of future success. From the U-boat depredations he obtained the convoy system: out of the

disaster of Caporetto he extracted the Supreme War Council: from the catastrophe of the 21st of March he drew the Unified Command and the immense American reinforcement.

His ascendancy in the high circles of British Government and in the councils of the Allies grew in the teeth of calamities. He did not sit waiting upon events to give a wiseacre judgment. He grappled with the giant events and strove to compel them, undismayed by mistakes and their consequences. Tradition and convention troubled him little. He never sought to erect some military or naval figure into a fetish behind whose reputation he could take refuge. The military and naval hierarchies were roughly handled and forced to adjust themselves to the imperious need. Men of vigour and capacity from outside the Parliamentary sphere became the ministerial heads of great departments. He neglected nothing that he perceived. All parts of the task of Government claimed his attention and interest. He lived solely for his work and was never oppressed by it. He gave every decision when it was required. He scarcely ever seemed to bend under the burden. To his native adroitness in managing men and committees he now added a high sense of proportion in war policy and a power of delving to the root of unfamiliar things. Under his Administration both the Island and the Empire were effectually organized for war. He formed the Imperial War Cabinet which centred in a single executive the world-spread resources of the British Monarchy. The convoy system, which broke the U-boat attack at sea; the forward impulsion in Palestine, which overwhelmed the Turks, and the unified command which inaugurated the victories in France, belonged in their main stress and resolve as acts of policy to no one so much as to the First Minister of the Crown.



## CHAPTER XI

### GENERAL NIVELLE'S EXPERIMENT

Joffre's Plans for 1917—His Decline—A New Figure—The Final Scene—The Appointment of Nivelle—The Nivelle-Mangin Model—The Sudden, Violent Blow—Nivelle's Extensions of Joffre's Plans—Nivelle and Haig—Nivelle's Relations with the War Cabinet—Unified Command—Ludendorff intervenes—*Alberich*—Nivelle's Repugnance to Facts—His Secret Memorandum captured—Intense German Preparation—Fall of Briand's Government—Power and Opinions of Painlevé—French Misgivings—New Factors—Nivelle Inflexible—The Eve of Battle—The Sixteenth of April—British Persistency—Lloyd George and the French Government—His Exhortation—The French Mutinies—Pétain's Achievement.

GENERAL JOFFRE'S plan for the campaign of 1917 was simple. It was to be a continuation of the Battle of the Somme, with only the shortest possible interlude during the extreme severity of the winter. The salient formed by the German line was to be crunched by convergent assaults of the British and the French. No time was to be lost in regrouping the armies ; no delay was to be allowed for the arrival even of friendly reinforcements, or for the completion of the new artillery and munitions programmes of the Allies. February 1 was fixed for the opening of the new battle. All the British forces available for the offensive and the northern group of the French armies were to attack due east, the British from Vimy to Bapaume, the French between the Somme and the Oise ; simultaneously another French Army of the centre group was to strike northward from the direction of Rheims. Then, after all these armies had been in full battle for a fortnight and the Germans if not broken were thoroughly gripped, the Fifth French Army, supported by the Reserve group to which it belonged, was to strike in to decide the struggle or exploit the victory. Taken in an enormous purse, or as between gigantic pincers, the German armies, if their front gave way on any considerable scale, were to see themselves confronted first with the capture of very large numbers of men and enormous masses of material, and secondly with a rupture of the front so wide as to be irreparable.

Such were the proposals which the French Generalissimo laid before the Allied Statesmen and Commanders at a Conference at Chantilly on November 16, 1916, and which he expounded with

precision in his Instruction of November 27. 'I have decided to seek the rupture of the enemy's forces by a general offensive executed between the Somme and the Oise at the same time as the British Armies carry out a similar operation between Bapaume and Vimy. This offensive will be in readiness for the 1st February, 1917, the exact date being fixed in accordance with the general military situation of the Allies.'

As will be seen as the account progresses, the launching of these tremendous operations from the beginning and during the whole of February would have caught the Germans at a moment exceedingly unfavourable to them. Here perhaps at last, after so many regrettable misadventures and miscalculations, Joffre might have won unchallenged laurels. But these possibilities remain in the mists of the unknown; for at this very moment Joffre was removed from his command, and the supreme direction passed to another hand.

Although the fame of Verdun and the Somme had been valiantly trumpeted by Press and propaganda to the uttermost ends of the earth, instructed opinion in Paris was under no illusions about either battle. The glory of Verdun belonged to the French soldiers, who under Castelnau, Pétain, Nivelle and Mangin had sustained the honour of France. The neglect and inadequacy of its defences was clearly traceable to the Commander-in-Chief. His astonishing correspondence with Gallieni in December, 1915, had already been read in secret session to the Chamber in July; and although Briand had sustained the Commander-in-Chief, he had clearly intimated that his retention of the command must be reviewed at a more propitious season. To remove him while the Battle of Verdun was at its height, when the offensive he had concerted with the British on the Somme had just begun, and before that battle and the hopes involved in it had reached their conclusion, could not, he had urged, be in accordance with the interests of France. But the Battle of the Somme was now over. Its last engagement had been fought, and, for all the heroism and sacrifice of the soldiers, fought without decisive gains. The German line, sorely pressed, had nevertheless been maintained unbroken. Nay, some of the troops<sup>1</sup> to invade Roumania had actually been drawn from the Western Front. Roumania had been destroyed and the German prestige re-established as the year, so terrible in its slaughters, drew to a crimson close. Now was a time of reckoning.

Now also for the first time Briand considered himself to have discovered a fitting and suitable successor to Joffre. The three great Chiefs of the French Army, the war horses of the fighting front, Commanders of armies or groups of armies since the be-

<sup>1</sup> The Alpine Corps and the 187th Brigade.

ginning of the war—Foch, Castelnau, Pétain—were all for reasons which seemed sufficient at the time ruled out. Of Castelnau it was said by the Socialist left that he was too religious. Of Pétain it was complained that he was not sufficiently gracious to members of the Parliamentary Commissions and other persons of distinction who visited his headquarters. And it was stated that General Sarrail, speaking to Clémenceau in August, 1915, had said of him, 'Il n'est pas des nôtres' (He's not one of us), to which that grand old man had replied, 'What do I care for that, if he can win us a victory?' But Clémenceau's day had not yet dawned, and the Sarrail suggestion festered wherever it had reached. Of Foch a keen propaganda, widespread but untraceable, had said, 'His health is broken; his temper and his nerves have given way. He is finished.' So much for Castelnau, Pétain and Foch.

But now a new figure had appeared. Nivelle had conducted the later battle of Verdun both with vigour and success, and under his orders Mangin had recovered the famous Fort of Douaumont. In the mood of the hour Joffre had already selected Nivelle to replace Foch. Forthwith a stream of celebrities took the road to Verdun and made for the first time the acquaintance of the new Army Commander. They found themselves in the presence of an officer whose modesty, whose personality, whose lucidity of expression, exercised an almost universal charm. A stream of glowing and delighted accounts flowed towards Paris. There can be no doubt of the attraction exercised by General Nivelle over the many experienced men of affairs with whom he came in contact. Briand, his Ministers, the delegations from the Chamber, were as swiftly impressed as Lloyd George and the British War Cabinet a few months later. Add to these pleasing impressions the glamour of unquestioned and newly won military achievement, and the elements of an alternative Commander-in-Chief were not in that weary moment lacking.

On December 27, Joffre was promoted Marshal of France and relieved of his command. A pleasing and pathetic personal light is thrown on the closing scene by Pierrefeuf's skilful pen. No one has been a more stern or more instructed critic of General Joffre. His searching studies, made with the fullest knowledge of events and first-hand observation, have been more fatal to the Joffre legend than all the other attacks and exposures which have appeared in France. But Pierrefeuf lights his severe pictures with many a deft and human touch. He has described the curious spectacle of Joffre's life at Chantilly during these two tremendous years. 'This office without maps; 'this table without papers; 'the long hours passed by the Commander-in-Chief in reading and in answering tributes of admiration received from all over the world; his comfortable and placid routine; his air of leisure and

serenity ; his excellent appetite and regular customs ; his long full nights of unbroken repose far from the crash of the cruel cannonade, 'cette vie de bon rentier au plus fort de la guerre.' He tells us of Joffre's habit when in difficulties with the enemy or with his Government, of patting his massive head with his hand and ejaculating with a droll air, 'Pauvre Joffre.' He tells us of his little aide-de-camp Captain Thouzelier ; so familiar a figure during all this period, flitting to and fro among the bureaux of the Grand Quartier Général, everywhere known as 'Tou Tou.' And how in moments of good humour and as a special compliment Joffre would address him as 'Sacré Thouzelier.' It is from such details that an impression is obtained of real historic value. But the picture is now to fade and vanish for ever.

'The new Marshal assembled at the Villa Poirer his principal officers to bid them his adieux: the ceremony was sad. All these men were painfully affected at the idea of separation from the illustrious man who had directed them for so long. Each bore in his breast the anxiety for a future which seemed sombre. The Marshal, who by his rank had the right to three orderly officers, asked who among those present wished to accompany him in his retirement. Alone the Commandant Thouzelier lifted spontaneously his hand. As the Marshal seemed astonished, General Gamelin said to him softly, "Don't bear a grudge to those who have their career to make." And certainly Joffre never bore any such grudge. When all the company had gone, the Marshal cast a final glance at the house which had nursed so much glory. Then with a smile and giving a friendly tap to his faithful Thouzelier, passing his hand across his head, he uttered his favourite expression, "Pauvre Joffre — Sacré Thouzelier."'

The appointment of General Nivelle was clearly a very questionable proceeding. There are enormous dangers in selecting for the command of the National Army or Fleet some comparatively junior officer, however well supported by subordinate achievement. To supersede not only Joffre, but Foch, Castelnau, Pétain, by a General like Nivelle, who had only commanded a single army for five months, was a step which could only be vindicated by extraordinary results. Happier would it have been for General Nivelle had he been left to make his way step by step in the high circles of command to which his good conduct and substantial qualities had won him admission.

Meanwhile the French Staff in the dusk of Joffre had formed new conceptions on tactics. The principle that 'the Artillery conquers the ground and the Infantry occupies it,' which had played a comforting, if somewhat barren, part in 1915 and 1916, was to a large extent discarded in favour of greater audacity.

<sup>1</sup> Pierrefeu: G.Q.G., Section I

The Nivelle-Mangin exploit on October 24 at Verdun had tended to become the model of the French Staff. It was the foundation, not only of General Nivelle's fame, but of his convictions. It comprised the whole of his message. He believed that he and his principal officers had found a sure, swift method of rupturing the German defence. He believed further that his method was capable of application on the largest possible scale. Multiply the scale of such an attack ten or fifteen times, and the resultant advantages would be multiplied in an even greater proportion. Just as Falkenhayn in his scheme of attack on Verdun had always in his mind the victory of Gorlice-Tarnow, so Nivelle a year later founded his hopes and reasoning upon his achievement at Douaumont.

No one will undervalue the tactics which gained success on October 24. They were hammered out by fighting Generals amidst the fiercest fires. However, it does not follow in war or in some other spheres that methods which work well on a small scale will work well on a great scale. As military operations become larger, they become more ponderous, and the time factor begins to set up complex reactions. Where days of preparation had sufficed, months may be required. Secrets that can be kept for days are apt to wear out in months. Surprise, the key to victory, becomes harder to secure with every additional man and gun. There were in the Nivelle-Mangin methods and in the spirit which animated them the elements of decisive success. But their authors had not learned to apply them on the gigantic scale with which they were now to be concerned: nor in the year 1917 did they possess the necessary superiority of force in its various forms. It was reserved for Ludendorff, on March 21, 1918, to execute what Nivelle had conceived, to combine audacity of action with a true sense of values, to make long preparations without prematurely losing secrecy, and to effect a strategic surprise on a front of fifty divisions. But this comparison cannot even be suggested without numerous reservations arising from the different circumstances.

Nivelle became Commander-in-Chief on December 12. He arrived at Chantilly on the 16th; and on that same date there issued from the French High Command a Memorandum on the new (Verdun) methods of the offensive which had no doubt been drawn up during the preceding month while Joffre still ruled, to greet the advent of the new Chief. General Nivelle lost no time in developing this theme in his own words. On December 21, in a letter to Sir Douglas Haig and in instructions to his own groups of armies, he wrote:

'The objective which the Franco-British armies should seek, is the destruction of the principal mass of the enemy. This

result can only be attained as the consequence of a decisive battle' . . .<sup>1</sup>

On the 24th, in a further Note to his Army Group Commanders, communicated to the British Staff, he affirmed:

'That the rupture of the front (penetration to the rear of the mass of the hostile batteries) is possible on condition it is made at a single stroke by a sudden attack in 24 or 48 hours.'<sup>2</sup>

And on January 29 to General Micheler whom he had placed in command of the three armies destined for the main attack, he emphasized 'the character of violence, of brutality, and of rapidity which should clothe the offensive, and in particular its first phase, the break-through.'

These quotations are typical of a continued flow of instructions and exhortations which General Nivelle, his Verdun Confraternity, and the French Headquarter Staff dutifully toiling behind them, lavished week after week upon their armies and their Allies.

The reader will remember Colonel de Grandmaison, the Director of Operations of the years before the war, the Apostle of the Offensive, immediately, every time—'*à outrance, à la baionnette*,' etc. War has claimed her Priest. The body of Colonel de Grandmaison lies mouldering in the grave—a grave, let no one fail to declare, guarded by the reputation of a brave gentleman eager to give his life for his country and his theories. He has fallen; but his theme has found a fleeting resting-place in the bosom of Colonel d'Alenson, Chief of the Staff of General Nivelle. Pierrefeu gives a vivid description of this officer who flitted so suddenly, so swiftly and so tragically across the scene. Immensely tall and thin, dark, sallow, cadaverous, silent, sombre, full of suppressed fire—a man absorbed in his convictions and ideas. The astonishing rocket rise of Nivelle had carried d'Alenson as an attendant star to the military zenith. But there is this fact about him which should be noted—he had but one year to live, and consequently but one coup to play. Gripped in the closing stages of consumption, he knew that his time was short. Still, short as it was, there was a deed to do which might win enduring honour. Such a personal situation is not favourable to the practical common sense and judgment peculiarly required in a Chief of Staff.

Fortune had no sooner hoisted General Nivelle to the topmost

<sup>1</sup> 'Le but que les armées franco-britanniques doivent atteindre, est la destruction de la masse principale des forces ennemies. Ce résultat ne peut être obtenu qu'à la suite d'une bataille décisive.' . . .

<sup>2</sup> 'Que la rupture de front (pénétration jusqu'en arrière du gros des batteries ennemies) est possible, à condition de se faire d'un seul coup par attaque brusquée en 24 ou 48 heures.'

summit of power than she deserted him. From the moment of his assuming command of the French armies everything went against him. He was from the outset more successful in exciting the enthusiasm of the political than of the military leaders: and he was more successful with the British Government even than with his own. He proceeded immediately to extend the scope of the immense operations which had been contemplated by Joffre. In his general offensive against the German salient Joffre had been careful to avoid the formidable span of thirty kilometres from Soissons to Craonne along the Aisne so well known to the British in 1914. General Nivelle ordered an additional offensive to be mounted against this front, and another further to the East at Moronvillers. Joffre had planned to attack at the earliest moment, even if it involved the sacrifice of some degree of preparation. Not only must Nivelle's scale be larger, but his preparations must be more detailed and complete; and for all this he was willing to pay in terms of time. Whereas the French Staff under Joffre had defined his aim as '*la recherche de la rupture du dispositif ennemi*,' Nivelle claimed nothing less than '*la destruction de la masse principale des armées ennemies*.' Whereas Joffre had contemplated a revival of the Somme battle on a still larger scale and under more favourable conditions, with three or four tremendous attacks engaging successively over a period of weeks the front and resources of the Germans, Nivelle proclaimed the doctrine of the sudden general onslaught culminating in victory or defeat within twenty-four, or at the most forty-eight, hours. And whereas Joffre would have struck early in February, Nivelle's extensions involved delay till April. The effect of the Nivelle alterations upon the Joffre plan was to make it larger, more violent, more critical, and much later.

On December 20, Nivelle explained his ideas to Sir Douglas Haig and invited him to recast the previous plans and extend the British Right from Bouchavesnes to the road from Amiens to Roye. These discussions—not to say disputes—between the French and British Headquarters upon the share which each should assume upon the front were continuous throughout the war. All followed the same course; the French dwelt on the number of kilometres they guarded, the British on the number of German divisions by which they were confronted, and each reinforced these potent considerations by reminding their Ally that they were about to deliver or to sustain a major offensive. On this occasion, however, Haig was not unwilling to meet the wishes of the French Command. He was in favour of renewing the offensive in France and was ready to fall in with Nivelle's views as to its direction and scope. Moreover, when the French wished to assume the brunt of the new attack and asked for assistance for this purpose, it was

hardly for the British to refuse. On December 25 therefore Haig wrote to Nivelle. 'I agree in principle with your proposals and am desirous of doing all I can to help you on the lines you suggest.' He also undertook to extend the British front from February 1 as far as the Amiens-St. Quentin Road. Both Haig and the British Headquarters were however extremely sceptical of the power of the French Army to carry out the part assigned to it in the ambitious programme of General Nivelle. They were further greatly pre-occupied by the condition of the Nord railway which, as maintained by the French, was at this time quite inadequate to sustain the important operations expected of the British Army. They therefore pressed for the improvement of their communications and declared themselves unable to fix a date for the British offensive while this extremely practical point remained unsettled.

In the course of these discussions the first hint of the proposed renewal of the offensive and of its changed form was conveyed to the British War Cabinet on December 26. Monsieur Ribot who had come to London stated that the new French Commander had an idea of breaking through on a wide front, keeping in reserve an army of manœuvre to carry on the attack after the line had been broken. For this to be achieved the British Army must add 30 or 40 kilometres to their present line. Mr. Lloyd George was at first adverse to the renewal of the offensive in France and especially to the renewal of a long offensive like the Somme. In all our talks before he had become Prime Minister I had found him in sympathy with my general views on this subject. His first effort on obtaining power was to find some alternative. At the Rome Conference which he attended at the beginning of January he developed the proposal for a heavy attack on the Austrian front, mainly by Italian troops supported by an enormous concentration of Anglo-French batteries. The French, under the Nivelle influence, opposed this plan. Sir William Robertson gave it no support and it was merely remitted to the Staffs to study. As the train bringing the Prime Minister home from Italy waited at the Gare du Nord, General Nivelle presented himself and unfolded his scheme in outline. The first impressions on both sides were favourable. Nivelle was invited to London and met the War Cabinet on January 15. His success was immediate. The British Ministers had never before met in Council a general who could express himself in forceful and continuous argument, and they had never before met a French general whom they could understand. Nivelle not only spoke lucidly, he spoke English. He had not only captured Fort Douaumont, but had an English mother. He explained that his method involved no resumption of the prolonged Somme battles but one short, sharp, decisive rupture. Mr. Lloyd George's resistance to the new offensive plan had been



melting rapidly since the meeting at the Gare du Nord. It was soon to transform itself into ardent support. Haig was also in London; he and Robertson were summoned to the Council, and a Memorandum was drawn up and signed by all three Generals formally approving a renewed offensive on the Western Front to begin not later than April 1, with consequential preliminary extensions of the British Front.

So far all had been harmonious, but the Prime Minister in the process of being converted from his previous opposition to the offensive had evolved a further design. He was already set upon his great and simple conception of a united command. Like the War Cabinet he was attracted by the personality of General Nivelle and disposed to back him—if at all—whole-heartedly. It was believed that better war direction could be obtained from the French. It was also believed—and in this case with far more justification—that one single controlling hand ought to prevail on the whole of the Western Front. 'It is not,' as Lloyd George said when later in the war he had gained his point, 'that one General is better than another, but that one General is better than two.' So Nivelle returned to Chantilly carrying the virtual promise of the Prime Minister that Haig and the British Army should be subordinated to his directions. These important additional developments were not at this stage imparted by the Prime Minister or the War Cabinet to either Robertson or Haig.

During January the inadequacy of the rolling stock on the Nord railway became so marked that after strenuous British protests another conference was convened at Calais on February 26. The French then produced a detailed scheme of organization for an allied G.H.Q. in France. This provided for a French Generalissimo with a Headquarters Staff of French and British Officers under a British Chief of Staff. A British Commander-in-Chief was to be retained in name for Adjutant-General's work, but without influence upon operations. The immediate resistance of the British Generals led to this proposal being put aside, and instead an agreement was drawn up placing the control of the forthcoming operations solely in Nivelle's hands and the British Army under his orders for that period. To this Haig and Robertson—lest worse should befall—agreed.

The episode—in itself remarkable—had sensibly impaired the relations between the British and French Headquarters. It seemed to the British High Command that Nivelle had been concerned in an attempt with their own Government to procure their subordination to himself, if not indeed their supersession. From the outset they had viewed the appointment of the new Commander-in-Chief over the heads of all the best-known French soldiers with some surprise. Now mistrust and resentment were

added. When on the strength of his new authority Nivelle sent instructions to Haig, couched in a tone of command, directing him to give up the long-planned British attack upon the Vimy Ridge in favour of the operations further to the South of Arras, Haig refused to comply. He applied to the British Government and 'requested to be told whether the War Cabinet wished the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force should be subject to such treatment by a junior foreign commander.' The strain was sharp. A compromise was eventually reached, but the friendly and intimate co-operation which had existed for so long between the British and French Staffs had undergone a noticeable decline, and Nivelle was criticized in French high military circles for having provoked this unfavourable result.

At this moment an unexpected event occurred. Ludendorff intervened, and the Germans acted. The great military personality which Germany had discovered in her need, armed in the panoply and under the ægis of Hindenburg, by one sure stroke overturned all the strategy of General Nivelle. Towards the end of February the German evacuation of the whole sector from Arras to Noyon began. Leaving a screen of troops to occupy the abandoned positions and fire off their guns and rifles, the German Army withdrew fifty miles from the threatened area of the salient, and with unhurried deliberation assumed their new deeply considered positions on what was henceforth to be known as the Hindenburg line. The German General Staff called this long prepared operation by the code name *Alberich*, after the malicious dwarf of the Nibelungen legend. They left their opponents in the crater fields of the Somme, and with a severity barbarous because far in excess of any military requirements, laid waste with axe and fire the regions which they had surrendered.

The retrograde movement, rumoured for some days, was first detected on the front of the British Fifth Army. On February 24 suspicion was aroused by the German artillery shelling its own trench lines. British patrols found the hostile trenches empty. The Fifth Army Operations Order of that same night said 'The enemy is believed to be withdrawing.' Immense clouds of smoke and the glare of incendiary fires by night proclaimed the merciless departure of the enemy. On the 25th he was reported to be retiring on a front of 18,000 yards, and on February 28 the British Intelligence spoke of a retirement to the Hindenburg line.

However absorbed a Commander may be in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is necessary sometimes to take the enemy into consideration. Joffre's plan had been to bite the great German salient in February; and whether it would have succeeded or not, no man can tell. The Nivelle plan was to bite it with still larger forces in April. But by March the salient had ceased to exist.

Three out of Nivelle's five armies, which were to have been employed in the assault, were now separated by a gulf of devastated territory from their objective. All their railroads, all their roads, all their magazines were so far removed from the enemy's positions that at least two months would be required to drag them forward into a new connection with the war. The remaining two armies were left with no other possibility before them than to deliver disconnected frontal attacks on the strongest parts of the old German line.

In these circumstances Nivelle's *Directive* to the British armies under his control is of great interest.

G.Q.G.,  
March 6, 1917.

*Direction for the Marshal.*

The retirement of the enemy on the front of the Fifth British Army constitutes a new fact, the repercussion of which upon the joint offensive of the Franco-British Armies must be examined.

So far the retreat of the Germans has only been carried out on the front of the Fifth-British Army. It will perhaps be extended to the region of the Somme and the Oise. But in any case there is no indication which would allow us to suppose that the enemy will act similarly on the front of attack of your Third and First Armies, any more than on that of the G.A.R. (Reserve Group). On the contrary, the so-called Hindenburg position is so disposed that the directions of our principal attacks, both in the British and the French zones, are such that they will outflank it and take it in reverse.

*In this respect the German retirement may be entirely to our advantage, even if it becomes general; and on this assumption I base a first decision, which is not to modify in any fundamental way the general plan of operations already settled,<sup>1</sup> and in particular to stick to the date fixed for the launching of our attacks.*

It must, however, be admitted that all our operations cannot be carried out in the way arranged, and I will therefore examine in succession the attitude to be adopted on the front of the British Armies and of the G.A.N. (Northern Group).

Distance, numbers, direction—all were changed. Yet it was decreed that the principle was unaffected and that the enterprise should proceed.

We have seen the tactical characteristics of the Joffre plan as developed by General Nivelle; the gigantic scale of the attack, its convergence upon the German salient; the minute study of detail and its comprehension by all ranks; and lastly, most precious and

<sup>1</sup> *My italics.*

vital of all, the brutal, violent explosion of surprise. Of these four conditions, the Scale had been reduced by half, and the Convergence practically prevented by the German retreat. The other two—Detail and Surprise—were destined to destroy one another.

The progress of the immense preparations on those parts of the British and French fronts still in offensive relation to the enemy was continually visible from the air. From the south of Arras to the south of Soissons along a front of nearly 150 kilometres the Germans knew that since their retirement they could not be attacked. The 20-kilometres sector before Arras and perhaps a hundred kilometres in Champagne remained the only dangerous fronts. On these fronts they could watch each day the gathering of the storm. Good intelligence and aerial observation enabled the slight uncertainty as to where the main thrusts of the attack would take place to be reduced still further. But information of far greater precision and certainty was soon to be placed at their disposal.

In his desire that all ranks should comprehend the spirit of his plan, and that Battalion Commanders and even Company Commanders should know its whole scope, General Nivelle had caused various documents of high consequence to be circulated among the troops in the line. The first of these was the famous Staff memorandum on the new principles of the offensive dated December 16 which has already been quoted. The imprudence of allowing such a document to pass into the hands of troops holding the line often at even less than 100 yards from the enemy was swiftly punished. On March 3 a raid by a German division of the Crown Prince's army captured this fateful document. 'This memorandum,' writes the Crown Prince,<sup>1</sup> 'contained matter of extraordinary value, it made clear that this time there was to be no question of a limited attack but a break-through offensive on a grand scale was contemplated. . . . The memorandum also made disclosures above all as to the particular nature of the surprise which the attacker had in view. This was based on the fact alleged to have been observed on our side that our defensive artillery as a rule made only a weak reply to the artillery preparation which preceded the attack. The French therefore thought to avoid protracted digging of earthworks for the attacking troops, particularly for the artillery.' . . . 'Graf Von Schulenberg . . . at once formulated the logical reply for the defence, the artillery preparation not only to be powerfully returned, but even beforehand all recognized enemy preparations for attack to be overwhelmed by concentrated artillery fire. We ventured to hope that the surprise might in this way be most effectively met and the

<sup>1</sup> *My War Experiences.*

sting taken out of the first attack, which experience had shown to be the strongest and best prepared.'

All through the month of March, General Nivelle's preparations for surprise continued to rivet the attention of the enemy. 'By April,' writes the Crown Prince, 'a great deal of information already obtained led to the conclusion that the main attack was to be expected before long against the south front of the Seventh and Third Armies west of the Argonne. The Intelligence Service further confirmed the impression left by the French attack memorandum which had been captured. . . . Great depths of artillery, enormous supplies of ammunition, innumerable battery positions directly before the enemy's first line, no strong fortifications of battery positions, simply cover from the enemy's view, complete cessation of hostilities. . . .' Again, 'On April 6 a clever attack by the 10th Reserve Division at Sapigneul brought us into possession of an order of attack of the French Fifth Army. In it the French attacking units were mentioned by name. The Fifth Army's objective was the line Prouvais-Provisieux-Aumenancourt. The Brimont [position] was to be taken by an enveloping movement from the north. Fresh information upon the anticipated French method of attack was given. The last veil concealing the intention of the French offensive was torn aside.'

All this time the Germans, spurred and assisted by the most perfect information, were preparing their defences. The army commands were reorganized. In February, when Nivelle's preparations first began to be obvious, the Crown Prince's command was extended eastwards to include the Seventh Army (of Prince Rupprecht's group), thus unifying the control of the entire front to be attacked. In March a whole additional army—the First—was interpolated between the Seventh and the Third. The Crown Prince's Headquarters were moved from Stenay to Charleville. Throughout March the reinforcements of his group of armies was unceasing. Machine-guns, artillery, battle-planes, intelligence service and labour battalions flowed in a broad stream to the threatened front. The relief gained by the Germans in the shortening of their line through their retirement from the salient enabled ever larger forces to be concentrated opposite the impending French attack. Night and day by ceaseless German toil the fortification of the whole area proceeded vehemently. Their position from Soissons to Rheims and beyond Rheims was by nature perhaps the strongest sector of the enemy's front. The Craonne plateau, the long hog's-back of the Chemin des Dames, the wooded bluffs and ridges of the Argonne were all developed by ardent toil into one homogeneous labyrinth of trenches and tunnels, crowded with battalions and machine guns and swathed in tangles of barbed wire. At the beginning of the year eight or

nine German divisions had stood upon this front; by the time Nivelle had perfected his plan of surprise forty, a number scarcely inferior to the attack, were waiting to receive him.

Other preoccupations began to gather round General Nivelle. He had been the choice of a French Government whose reputation and existence were largely bound up with his. In Briand, the Premier, and in Lyautey, the Minister of War, he had sponsors who could by no means separate themselves from him. No Government could afford to change their mind about a Commander they had violently elevated above all the recognized chiefs of the profession. But now suddenly this sure support was to fail. Early in March, General Lyautey became entangled in the Parliamentary meshes. He precipitately resigned, and in his fall dragged down Briand and the whole Government. New rulers ascended the tribune of power, with whom Nivelle had no associations but those of hostility. Under a Ribot Administration Painlevé became Minister of War.

Paul Painlevé was a man of marked intellectual distinction, ardent in politics, great in mathematics, a faithful partisan of the Left, and ready to conform to all its formularies so far as a wide interpretation of the public interest allowed. In the original Briand Ministry Painlevé had been Minister of Education, charged with the study of inventions which might be serviceable to the armies. In this capacity he had constantly and freely toured the front, and discussed not only inventions but plans with most of the important Commanders. He knew them all, and most of them appreciated his keen intellect. Painlevé had discerned Pétain. This General was so cold and reserved to the Members of Parliamentary Commissions that he had incurred damaging unpopularity in influential circles. But Painlevé admired him for his independence, and perhaps Pétain had responded to such a recognition. Painlevé's nominee for the succession to Joffre had been Pétain. When Briand at the end of October, 1916, had reconstructed his Cabinet, he had done so on the basis of the dignified liquidation of Joffre and the enthronement of Nivelle. Painlevé, offered a renewal of his offices, had refused to continue on the specific ground that he did not agree with the appointment of Nivelle. His entrance into the Chamber after this decision—a serious one for any public man to take in time of war—had been marked by a salutation not only from the Left but almost of a general character. Now he was Minister of War, and under the aged Prime Minister, the most important figure in the new French Administration. Instead of a Briand wedded to Nivelle's success, the new Commander-in-Chief now had a Painlevé who, however loyal to his subordinate, had publicly and in advance testified that he regarded his appointment as a mistake.

But Painlevé's objections to Nivelle were not limited to the personal aspect. Painlevé, and the political forces which at that time he embodied, were the declared opponents of the great offensives on the Western Front. He agreed with Pétain that France should not be bled to death, that the life of the French Army must be husbanded, that there was no chance of the break through (*la percée*) in that year in that theatre, that the gradual capture of limited objectives was the only prize within reach, and that moderation of aim and economy of the lives of French soldiers were the key-notes of the immediate military policy. Nivelle stood at the opposite pole: the offensive on the largest scale, the French in the van; the armies hurled on in absolute confidence of decisive victory; the rupture of the German line on an enormous front; the march through the gap of great armies of manoeuvre; the re-establishment of open warfare; the expulsion of the invader from the soil of France. Nor were these differences of principle academic. Nivelle was actively planning the most ambitious offensive ever undertaken by the French; and Painlevé was the Minister who had to take responsibility before Parliament and before history for all that Nivelle might try to do. It is not easy to say which of the two men was in the more unpleasant position.

Had Painlevé acted upon his convictions, which in this case were proved right, he would have dismissed Nivelle and appointed to the Chief Command Pétain, in whom he had confidence and with whose general military outlook he and his party were in entire sympathy. But practical difficulties and many valid considerations dissuaded him from decisions which, if he had survived them, would have proved his title-deeds to fame. He temporized. He made the best of the situation as he found it. He bowed—who in great position has not had to so?—before the day-to-day force and logic of circumstances, before the sullen drift of events. He acquiesced in Nivelle; he submitted to his plans—already so far advanced.

In the face of all the facts which marched upon him grimly and in spite of pressures of every kind, from every side, increasing constantly in severity, General Nivelle displayed an amazing persistence. In February he was aware of Pétain's scepticism, and of misgivings at the British Headquarters about his general plan. When the German retreat was apparent, General Micheler, his own man, chosen specially to command the main offensive, wrote to point out that everything was changed and to ask whether it was wise in the new circumstances to count on 'an exploitation having the rapid character of a forward march.' 'The character of violence, of brutality and of rapidity,' replied Nivelle on April 1, 'must be maintained. It is in the speed and surprise

caused by the rapid and sudden irruption of our Infantry upon the third and fourth positions that the success of the rupture will be found. No consideration should intervene of a nature to weaken the élan of the attack.' Warned that the enemy were fully prepared; knowing as he did before the final signal was given that his detailed plan had fallen into their hands, he still extolled the virtue of Surprise. Behind him stood Colonel d'Alenson with fevered eye and a year to live. At his side was the redoubtable Mangin burning with the ardour of battle, confident that on the evening of the first day of the offensive his cavalry would be scampering in pursuit on the plains of Laon. But elsewhere in the high commands of the armies and in the Bureaux of the Headquarters Staff, doubt and distrust welled in chilling floods.

Painlevé became Minister of War on March 19. Everyone knew that the offensive was imminent. 'On the 20th,' wrote Painlevé, 'before even being installed in the Ministry, I learned, I might say by public voice, that this was fixed for April 8, and that in consequence the British would attack at Arras on the 4th.' These dates were eventually postponed from day to day by unsuitable weather until April 9 and 16 respectively. On March 22 the Minister had his first interview with the Commander-in-Chief. He told him that it was well known his choice for the Commander of the army would have been different, but that was past, and he could count on his full support.' Painlevé proceeded however to point out that the original plan of operations had been affected by a series of first-class events. The German retreat, the outbreak of the Russian revolution, the certain and imminent entry of the United States into the war against Germany—surely these had introduced some modification into the problem. In the name of the Government he urged the General to review the situation and reconsider his position freely, without feeling himself tied by any expectations he had previously formed himself or expressed to others. 'A new situation ought to be considered with a new eye.'

Nivelle's mind was not open to such argument. His confidence was unshakable. According to Painlevé,<sup>1</sup> he expressed himself as follows: The German retreat did not inconvenience him. It liberated more French than German divisions. He could not himself have prescribed movements of the enemy which would better have favoured his own decisions. The narrowing of the front of attack would be remedied by prolonging the French right and including a portion of the Army Group under Pétain, opposite Moronvillers. The enemy's front would be broken, it might almost be said, without loss. As for the Plateau of Craonne 'he had it in his pocket,' the only thing he feared was that the Germans

<sup>1</sup> 'Comment j'ai nommé Foch et Pétain.'



would make off. The more they reinforced their front the more startling would be the French victory, if only the intensity of the attack were continually increased. Perhaps the third day one might draw breath on the Serre after 30 kilometres of pursuit, but 'it would be difficult to hold the troops back once they got started,' and so on. Such was the mood of General Nivelle.

Upon the new Minister of War there flowed advices of a very different character. Staff Officers of the highest credentials wrote secretly, at the risk of their commissions, solemn, reasoned warnings of the impending disaster, if the orders which had been given were actually carried out. All the three Commanders of army groups, Franchet d'Espérey, Pétain, even Micheler, in respectful but decisive terms dissociated themselves from the idea that a sudden violent rupture of the front was practicable. All three however recognized the danger of allowing the initiative to pass to the enemy. Pétain alone suggested a pregnant alternative, namely to let the Germans attack the French, and then launch the prepared French offensive as a gigantic counter-stroke.

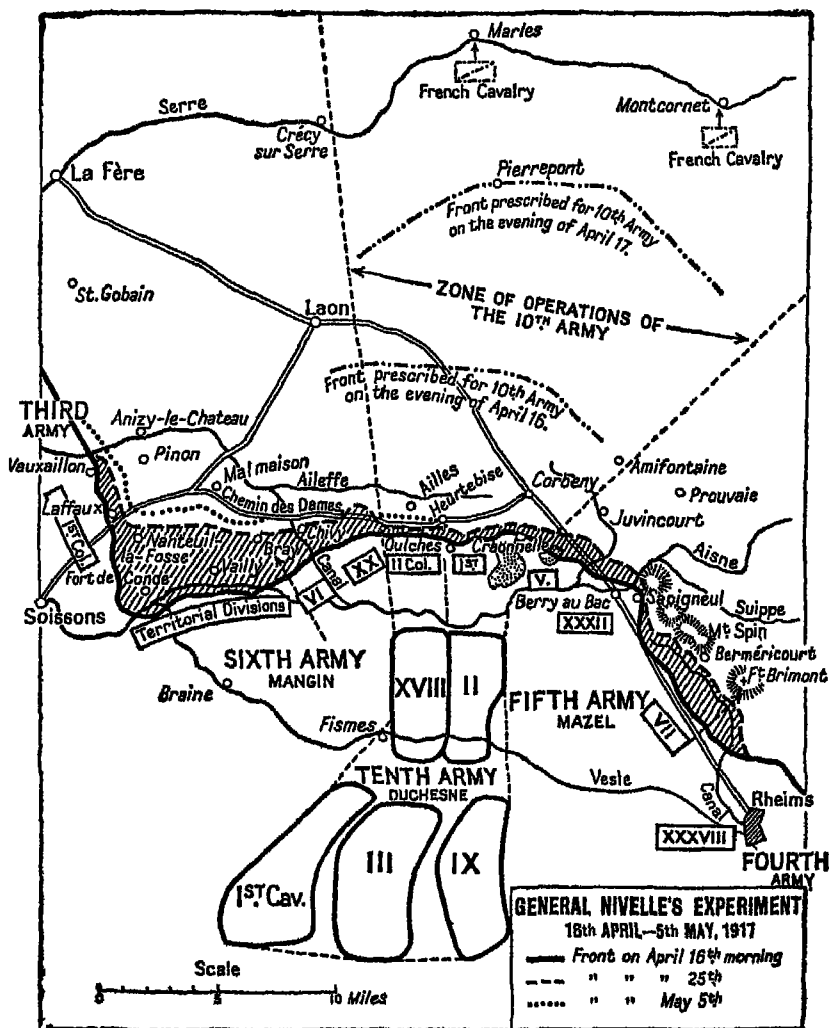
Painlevé summoned a conference which met on the evening of April 3 at the War Ministry, at which the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief, together with several other Ministers, were present. He drew General Nivelle's attention to the misgivings of his principal subordinates. To the last Nivelle was undaunted. Complete victory was certain. The first two positions of the enemy would be carried with insignificant loss. Did they think he was unaware that to take the third and fourth positions one must begin by taking the first and second? No one knew better than he that good weather was essential to his mode of attack. All would be decided in twenty-four hours, or forty-eight at the most. If within that time the rupture was not obtained it would be useless to persevere. 'Under no pretext,' he declared, 'will I recommence a Somme battle.' Finally, if he did not command their confidence, let them appoint a successor. The Ministers were overwhelmed by this extraordinary assurance, and General Nivelle left the conference convinced that the last word had been spoken.

Several times in this struggle the name of General Messimy occurs, and always finds itself associated with decided action for good or for ill. We see him in 1911 as War Minister arraigning Michel the Prophet before a Sanhedrin of Generals and dismissing him into the cool shades. We see him on August 25, 1914, again at the centre of power, serving General Joffre with the formal order to assign at least three Army Corps to the defence of Paris, which that General had proposed to declare an 'open town' and to abandon as such. We see him a few days later removed from the War Office by one of the innumerable and to the foreigner baffling shufflings of French politics in the very height and climax of the

war's opening convulsion, but not until he had ordered that Paris should be defended, had procured the necessary Army, and had appointed Galliéni, instead of his former victim, Michel, to the vital task. Thereafter at once he takes his place at the head of a Brigade and vanishes into the dust and confusion of the conflict, until now on April 5, 1917, two and a half years later, Messimy emerges quite suddenly with an extremely irregular letter which he presented to Monsieur Ribot. This letter marshalled all the arguments against the offensive. 'Prisoners yes, guns yes, a narrow band of territory of perhaps 10 or 12 kilometres; but at an outrageous cost, and without strategic results. Urgent conclusion—give without losing an hour the order to delay the attack till the weather improves.' These views he declared were written 'almost under the dictation of Micheler,' and represented the conviction of the 'most famous Chiefs of the French Army.'

But now the hour was imminent. The vast preparations were everywhere moving forward to explosion-point. The British Cabinet had been won over. The British Headquarters had been persuaded. The co-operation of England, the great Ally, had by a tremendous effort been obtained, and once obtained would be given with crude and downright force. To resist the plan, to dismiss the Commander, meant not only a Ministerial and a Parliamentary crisis—possibly fatal to the Government—but it also meant throwing the whole plan of campaign for the year into the melting-pot, and presumably, though not certainly resigning the initiative to the Germans. So Nivelle and Painlevé, these two men whose highest ambitions had both been newly and almost simultaneously gratified, found themselves in the most unhappy positions which disillusioned mortals can occupy: the Commander having to dare the utmost risks with an utterly sceptical Chief behind him; the Minister having to become responsible for a frightful slaughter at the bidding of a General in whose capacity he did not believe, and upon a military policy of the folly of which he was justly convinced. Such is the pomp of power!

I shall not attempt to describe the course either of the French offensive which began on April 16 nor of the brilliant preliminary operation by which the British Army at the Battle of Arras captured the whole of the Vimy Ridge. Numerous excellent accounts—French, English and German—are extant. It will here be sufficient to say that the French troops attacked in unfavourable weather with their customary gallantry. On a portion of the main front attacked they penetrated to a depth of 3 kilometres; they took between the 16th and the 20th, 21,000 prisoners and 183 guns, lost over 100,000 soldiers and failed to procure any strategic decision. It was only indeed on the fronts of Moronvillers and Soissons-Craonne, added by Nivelle to the attack after the docu-



ments captured by the enemy had actually been written, that surprise and success were alike achieved. By the evening of the 16th Nivelle's high hopes and confidence had withered, and his orders for the resumption of battle on the 17th implied not merely tactical modifications but the substitution of far more moderate strategic aims.

The later phases of the battle were in some respects more successful than its beginning; nor were the losses of the French so disproportionate to those of the Germans as in the Joffre offensives. In fact the Nivelle offensive was the least costly, both actually and relatively to the enemy's loss, of any ever undertaken by the French. But the General could never escape from the consequences of his sanguine declarations. Again and again he had affirmed that, unless the rupture was immediate and total 'within twenty-four or forty-eight hours,' it would be useless to continue the operation. He had predicted such a rupture with many circumstances of detail. Almost everyone had doubted before. Now all doubts were certainties. The slaughter, woeful to the shrunken manhood of France, was fiercely exaggerated. Disturbances broke out among the troops, and in the capital a storm of fury arose against the General. His wish to convert the great operation into a more modest enterprise was brushed aside. On April 29 Pétain became, as Chief of the General Staff, the adviser of the French Cabinet on the whole conduct of the military operations.

A peculiar situation followed the collapse of Nivelle's offensive. The British Army had, as we have seen, already entered with vigour and success upon their very important part in the general plan. The victory of Arras, with its capture of the Vimy Ridge, thirteen thousand prisoners and two hundred guns, had been achieved without undue sacrifice. Haig had originally intended to close these operations after the capture of Monchy-le-Preux and to begin as soon as possible the attempt to clear the coastal sector by the capture of the Messines and Passchendaele ridges. But the conditions prevailing in the French Army and in Paris were such that it was thought dangerous to relax even for a few weeks the pressure upon the enemy. The continuance of the British attack was however very costly, and unrewarded by any real success. At an early stage the Germans developed a new method of defence. Holding their front system of trenches with few men, they kept strong forces intact close at hand, and by heavy counter-attacks independently launched they robbed, in nearly every case, the British of their initial gains.

The Prime Minister was himself deeply committed by his facile acceptance of the Nivelle schemes to the offensive mood. He showed himself resolute to persevere. The British Army should

be thrown ungrudgingly into the battle of attrition, and every effort must be made to induce the French to exert themselves unceasingly to the utmost. General Headquarters thus found in Mr. Lloyd George at this juncture a strong supporter. His action cannot be judged apart from the situation. The hour was tragic. The U-boat sinkings for April, surpassing all previous records, had reached the total of 800,000 tons. The fatal curve was still rising, and in British minds it dominated everything. 'Let the armies fight while time remained.' Or in Lord Fisher's challenging phrase 'Can the Army win the war before the Navy loses it?' Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief and Sir William Robertson proceeded together to Paris, and in conference on May 4 and 5, Mr. Lloyd George addressed to Messieurs Ribot, Painlevé and General Pétain some of the most strenuous exhortations to continue the offensive that have ever passed between Allies. The whole proceedings of the conference have been published by Mermeix in one of his excellent books.<sup>1</sup> They form an astonishing chapter in Anglo-French relations and in the life of Mr. Lloyd George.

Sir William Robertson sternly demanded a continuance of the offensive, and an agreement on this was reached among the Generals. Then Mr. Lloyd George began. 'We have wished,' he said, 'to make sure that there was agreement between us on the general principle of continuing the offensive with all our resources and with all our energies.' Speaking in the presence of Nivelle and championing his case against his own Government, 'we have no need,' he went on, 'to know the details which concern particularly those who have the direct responsibility for the military operations. We prefer that Generals shall keep their plans of execution to themselves. When plans are put on paper for communication to Ministers, it is rare that the Ministers are the only ones to know them. We do not seek to know the precise plan of attack nor the number of guns or divisions engaged. It is essential that these details remain secret. In England we do not ask such questions. Besides, General Robertson does not encourage us to ask them. We treat him with the respect which he deserves and we refrain from indiscreet curiosity.' Under this allusion Ribot and Painlevé both interrupted to declare themselves in agreement with the rule that apart from general principles and the outline of the plan everything must rest with the Generals alone. Mr. Lloyd George continued: 'In the name of the British Government we declare to you that we approve the military protocol which General Robertson has just read. But there must be no doubt about the sense of this document. Do we mean by an offensive an offensive limiting numbers to two or three divisions, or an offensive of great armies like that which Marshal Haig has

<sup>1</sup> *Nivelle et Painlevé.*

launched before Arras? After full consideration the British War Cabinet ask of its French colleagues to push the offensive during the course of this year with all the force which our two armies are capable.'

He proceeded to dilate upon the results of the offensive so far as it had gone. 'The highest hopes had not been realized, but without hopes, even beyond what is possible, how shall we find the indispensable impetus of war? In spite of all, we have taken 45,000 prisoners, 450 guns, 800 mitrailleuses, and we secured 200 square kilometres. Supposing it was the Germans who had obtained these results, how great would have been our own discouragement! We ought not to leave the enemy a single moment of rest. If we stopped our offensive or if we limited ourselves to small demonstrations the Germans will say the Allies are beaten and by going on sinking ships we shall starve England and render the continuation of the war impossible.' He concluded by urging the most extreme intensity of action throughout the whole summer. The French Premier responded to this oburgation with some reserve. He undertook to continue the offensive, subject to not squandering the reserves of France. He expressed admiration of the resolute language of Mr. Lloyd George, with which his own sentiments accorded. Painlevé also declared that the battle would continue with all possible energy. 'We have kept our promises and done our part,' was Mr. Lloyd George's final remark, 'and we are confident you will keep yours.'

These undertakings extorted in full conference from the French Government by the imperious Welshman did not accord either with the final decision of the French Staff or the facts of the case. The battle was indeed continued, and during the next fortnight both Craonne and the Chemin des Dames were captured. But upon the very day of the conference in Paris, there had occurred a deeply disquieting incident. A French division ordered into the line refused to march. The officers succeeded in recalling the soldiers to their duty, and the division took part in the fighting without discredit. It was the first drop before the downpour.

The demoralization of the French Army was proceeding apace. Want of confidence in their leader, cruel losses and an active defeatist propaganda had produced an intense spasm throughout its ranks. Mutinies—some of a very dangerous character—occurred in sixteen separate Army Corps. Some of the finest troops were involved. Divisions elected councils. Whole regiments set out for Paris to demand a Peace by negotiation and more home leave. A Russian force of about 15,000 Infantry had before the Revolution been sent to be armed and equipped in France. These men were affected by the political developments in their own country. They had put it to the vote whether they should take

part in the battle of April 16, and had decided by a majority to do so. They were used by the French in a ruthless manner, and nearly 6,000 had been killed or wounded. The survivors went into open revolt. One sentence in their Manifesto reveals the propaganda of a master hand. 'We have been told,' so the complaint begins, 'that we have been sent to France to pay for munitions sold to Russia.' It was not until prolonged artillery fire had been employed against these troops that they were reduced to submission and disbanded.

The spirit of the French nation was not unequal to this perilous trial. On May 15, Nivelle refusing to resign was dismissed, and Pétain became Commander-in-Chief. Loyal troops surrounded those who had fallen from their duty. Old Territorials, the fathers of families, pleaded with the infuriated linesmen. The disorders were pacified or suppressed. Over all a veil of secrecy was thrown so impenetrable that though scores of thousands of Frenchmen were concerned, no whisper ever reached the enemy, and whatever information was imparted to Sir Douglas Haig long remained buried in the bosom of his immediate staff. Pétain was of all others fitted to the healing task. In a period of several months he visited a hundred divisions of the Army, addressed the officers and men, heard grievances and complaints, mitigated the severities of the service, increased the leave of the soldiers, and diminished by every skilful shift the fighting on the French front. He thus restored by the end of the year the morale and discipline of that sorely tried, glorious Army upon whose sacrifices the liberties of Europe had through three fearful campaigns mainly depended.

## CHAPTER XII

### AT THE MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS

I rejoin the Government—Munitions Supply—The Admiralty Claims—The Limiting Factors—Reorganization of the Ministry of Munitions—The Munitions Council—The Work of the Munitions Council—Sir James Stevenson—My Memorandum of November 9, 1916—The Attack by Armoured Vehicles—Scale and Intensity—Futility of Pure Attrition—Six Forms of War Machinery—Blasting Power and Moving Power—The Fateful Issue.

ON July 16, 1917, the Prime Minister invited me to join the new Government. He proposed to me either the Ministry of Munitions or the newly created Air Ministry, with the proviso that if I chose the latter, he must have till the afternoon to make certain personal rearrangements in the Administration. I said at once that I preferred Munitions; and the matter was settled in as many words as I here set down.

The appointment was announced the next morning. There was an outcry among those who at that time had accustomed themselves to regard me with hostility. An immediate protest was made by the Committee of the National Union of Conservative Associations, and an influential deputation of Unionist Members presented themselves to the leader of the Party in strong complaint. Mr. Lloyd George had however prepared the ground with his accustomed patience. Lord Northcliffe was on a mission to the United States, and appeased. Sir Edward Carson and General Smuts were warm advocates. The group of Ministers who had successfully prevented my entering the Government on its formation was no longer intact. Some had been previously placated: the remnant acquiesced. And Mr. Bonar Law, who had always been a friend, returned a very stiff answer to his deputation. I was re-elected for Dundee by a remarkable majority, and took up my duties without delay. Not allowed to make the plans, I was set to make the weapons.

The internal conditions of munitions supply, and indeed the whole structure of the British Executive, were vastly different from those I had quitted twenty months before, and still more from the days when I was First Lord of the Admiralty. In the first period of the war—indeed almost to the end of 1915—the resources of Britain far exceeded any organization which could



employ them. Whatever was needed for the fleets and armies had only to be ordered in good time and on a large enough scale. The chief difficulty was to stretch the mind to a hitherto unimagined size of events. Megalomania was a positive virtue. Indeed, to add a nought, or a couple of noughts, to almost any requisition or plan for producing war supplies would have constituted an act of merit. Now all was changed. Three years of the struggle had engaged very nearly the whole might of the nation. Munition production of every kind was already upon a gigantic scale. The whole island was an arsenal. The enormous national factories which Mr. Lloyd George had planned were just beginning to function. The first difficulties with the Trade Unions about the dilution of labour had been overcome. Hundreds of thousands of women were making shells and fuses cheaper and better than the most skilled craftsmen had done before the war. The keenest spirits in British industry were gathered as State servants in the range of palatial hotels which housed the Ministry of Munitions. The former trickles and streamlets of war supplies now flowed in rivers rising continuously.

Nevertheless the demands of the fighting fronts eagerly and easily engulfed all that could be produced. We were in the presence of requirements at once imperative and apparently insatiable; and now at last our ultimate capacity began to come into view. I found myself in a world of 'Limiting Factors' and 'Priorities.' All problems were complicated by the fact that the Admiralty had not been brought within the general sphere of munitions supply. When the munitions crisis of May, 1915, had overwhelmed the War Office and the Liberal Government, the Admiralty had not been found wanting in any important respect. All supplies for the Fleets were at hand or coming forward in abundance in consequence of the orders we had placed at the beginning of the war, and which had received a further expansion during my partnership with Lord Fisher. The Admiralty therefore had been able to retain their separate and privileged position. They had their own great supply departments, their own factories, their own programmes, and their own allegiances. In a period when a general view and a just proportion were the master-keys, they vigorously asserted their claim to be a realm within a realm—efficient, colossal, indispensable, well-disposed, but independent.

In their view the Navy came first not only in essentials, but in refinements, not only in minima but in precautionary margins. And of all these the Board of Admiralty was the sole judge. Theirs was the first claim upon materials and skilled labour of all kinds. After that had been met, they were genuinely glad that the Armies, the Air Force and, at a considerable interval, the civil

population should be adequately maintained. This dominating position was fortified by the grave anxieties of the U-boat campaign, and lost nothing from the virile personality of the new First Lord.

The career of Sir Eric Geddes during the war had been astonishing. As the General Manager of an important Railway, versed in every detail of its working from the humblest to the highest, he possessed not only the practical organizing power of a skilful business man, but the *quasi*-official outlook of the head of a great public service. To this he added those qualities of mental and physical energy, of industry, of thoroughness and compulsive force, often successful, always admirable, and never more needed than at this time. He had risen rapidly under Mr. Lloyd George to be one of the principal figures of the Ministry of Munitions in its early days. He had reorganized the railways of the British front in France with the rank and uniform of a Major-General. He had controlled the Supply Departments of the Navy with the rank and uniform of a Vice-Admiral. Now the same hand which had conducted him through these swift and surprising transformations placed him at the head of the Board of Admiralty. He reinforced its particularism with an ability and domineering vigour all his own.

Judged by the truest sense of proportion, the Navy had a right to absolute priority in all that was necessary to grapple with the supreme peril of the U-boat attack, including the vast replacement of the sunken merchant ships. But when such rights were extended to all the other branches of the Naval Service, and even to strengthening the Battle Fleet and increasing its already overflowing resources of stores, guns and ammunition, a serious inroad was made upon what was due to the armies and to the ever-growing service of the air. The War Cabinet, riveted by the U-boat attack and rightly determined to give the Navy all it wanted for the purpose of meeting it, was not found capable of drawing the necessary distinctions between this and less imperious services. In consequence the Grand Fleet absorbed in the final phases of the war a larger share of our resources than was its due, and our war effort in the field was unwarrantably diminished to that extent.

The principal limiting factors to munitions production with which I was confronted in the autumn of 1917 were four in number, viz., shipping (tonnage), steel, skilled labour and dollars. The last of these had been rendered less acute by the accession of the United States to the Allies. We had already sold a thousand millions sterling of American securities, and had borrowed heavily to feed and equip ourselves, and our Allies, before this decisive event. Our transatlantic credits were practically

exhausted at the beginning of 1917. The dollar situation was now somewhat relieved. A door that would otherwise have closed altogether was now held partially open. None the less the limits of the power of purchase both in American and Canadian dollars imposed a restrictive finger on the lay-out of every programme.

The stringency in shipping was acute. The losses of the U-boat war, the requirements of the armies in every theatre, the food and what remained of the trade of Britain, the needs of the Allies, the increasing desires of the United States, and the importations of all the raw materials of war, had drawn out our Mercantile Marine to its most intense strain. Tonnage therefore was at this period the controlling factor in our production. Steel ranked next to tonnage, and was a more direct measure of war effort. The steel output of Great Britain had already nearly doubled. Mines which would not pay in peace had come into active production. But in the main we depended for iron ore upon the north coast of Spain, and all vessels which carried it ran perilous voyages amid frequent sinkings. In addition we bought finished steel to the utmost limit of our dollars from the United States and Canada, as well as shell castings of every intermediate form.

Of all we produced or obtained the Admiralty took their fill. The prime need was the replacement of merchant ships sunk by submarines. The War Cabinet had approved an ambitious programme of building 3,000,000 tons of mercantile shipping in 1918. This claimed priority even over the innumerable anti-U-boat flotillas. Next came the improved heavy-shell outfits which the disappointing experiences of Jutland were claimed to require. Not till these and other less vital naval demands had been satisfied could the requirements of the British armies for guns, shells, tanks and indispensable subsidiaries be considered. We had also to provide a large proportion of steel for the French shell factories under arrangements we had made early in the war ; and to Italy we had to send both steel and coal in serious quantities under agreements, failure in which would have crippled her fighting strength.

Lastly, there were the limits fixed by the supply of skilled labour. And here again the Army and the Air Force clashed with the Admiralty at a hundred points. All the most perfect lethal instruments were demanded at once by the three Services, and at the same time ever-increasing numbers of skilled artisans were drawn into the fighting sphere. The ceaseless process of training and dilution steadily expanded our supply. But in spite of the earnest help afforded by all the responsible Labour leaders, Trade Union principles and prejudices made every step delicate. Such

were the main features of the task with which I had the honour to be entrusted.

If I were to attempt to exhaust the details, this chapter would become a volume. We depended, and through us the Allies, upon the sea power which drew from the remotest portions of the globe not only the bulky imports, but all those rare and scarce commodities without which steel cannot be hardened or explosives made, or Science realize its full death-dealing power, or an island people get their daily bread. Some of these aspects will emerge in the narrative.

The growth of the Ministry of Munitions had far out-stripped its organization. A year had passed since its creator, Mr. Lloyd George, had moved on to still more intense spheres. The two gifted Ministers who had succeeded him, Mr. Montagu and Dr. Addison, had dealt with the needs as they arose, shouldering one responsibility after another, adding department to department and branch to branch, without altering in essentials the central organization from the form it had assumed in the empirical and convulsive period of creation. All the main and numberless minor decisions still centred upon the Minister himself. I found a staff of 12,000 officials organized in no less than fifty principal departments each claiming direct access to the Chief, and requiring a swift flow of decisions upon most intricate and inter-related problems. I set to work at once to divide and distribute this dangerous concentration of power.

Under a new system the fifty departments of the Ministry were grouped into ten large units each in charge of a head who was directly responsible to the Minister. These ten heads of groups of departments were themselves formed into a Council like a Cabinet. The Members of the Council were charged with dual functions: first, to manage their group of departments; secondly, to take a general interest in the whole business of the Ministry. They were to develop a 'Council sense,' and not to regard themselves as confined to their own special sphere. Each group of departments was denoted by a letter. Thus D was design, G guns, F finance, P projectiles, X explosives, and so on. By ringing the changes upon these letters committees could be formed exactly adapted to handle any particular topic, while the general movement of business was held firmly together by means of a co-ordinating or 'Clamping' committee. The 'big business men' who now formed the Council were assisted by a strong cadre of Civil Servants, and I obtained for this purpose from the Admiralty my old friends Sir William Graham Greene and Mr. Masterton-Smith. Thus we had at once the initiative, drive, force and practical experience of the open competitive world coupled with those high standards of experience,

of official routine, and of method, which are the qualifications of the Civil Service.

The new organization was announced to the public on August 18 in a memorandum from which the following paragraphs are taken:—

‘ . . . In the fourth year of the war, we are no longer tapping the stored-up resources of national industry or mobilizing them and applying them for the first time to war. The magnitude of the effort and of the achievement approximates continually to the limits of possibility. Already in many directions the frontiers are in sight. It is therefore necessary not simply to expand, but to go back over ground already covered, and by more economical processes, by closer organization, and by thrifty and harmonious methods, to glean and gather a further reinforcement of war power.

‘ It is necessary for this purpose that the Minister of Munitions should be aided and advised by a Council formally established. The time has come to interpose between more than fifty separate departments on the one hand and the Minister on the other, an organism which in the main will play a similar part and serve similar needs as the Board of Admiralty or the Army Council. It has been decided therefore to form the departments of the Ministry into ten groups, classified as far as possible by kindred conditions, placing in superintendence over each group an experienced officer of the Ministry, and to form these officers into a Council for the transaction of business of all kinds in accordance with the general policy which the Minister receives from the Cabinet.’<sup>1</sup> Here is my Council as it began:—

*Financial Secretary.*—Sir LAMING WORTHINGTON-EVANS.

*Parliamentary Secretary.*—Mr. KELLAWAY.

#### GROUPS OF DEPARTMENTS.

*F. Finance.*—Sir HERBERT HAMBLING.

*D. Design.*—Major-General the Hon. FRANCIS BINGHAM.

*S. Steel and Iron.*—Mr. JOHN HUNTER.

*M. Materials.*—Sir ERNEST MOIR.

*X. Explosives.*—Sir KEITH PRICE.

*P. Projectiles, etc.*—Sir JAMES STEVENSON.

*G. Guns.*—Sir GLYNN WEST.

*E. Engines.*—Sir ARTHUR DUCKHAM.

*A. Allies.*—Sir FREDERICK BLACK, later Sir CHARLES ELLIS.

*L. Labour.*—Sir STEPHENSON KENT.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix L.

## THE SECRETARIAT.

*(At a later date.)**R. Requirements and Statistics.*—Mr. LAYTON.*War Office Representative.*—Major-General FURSE.*W. Trench Warfare and Inventions.*—Major-General SEELY.

The relief was instantaneous. I was no longer oppressed by heaps of bulky files. Every one of my ten Councillors was able to give important final decisions in his own sphere. The daily Council meeting kept them in close relation with each other and with the general scheme; while the system of committees of councillors enabled special questions to be brought to speedy conclusion. Once the whole organization was in motion it never required change. Instead of struggling through the jungle on foot I rode comfortably on an elephant whose trunk could pick up a pin or uproot a tree with equal ease, and from whose back a wide scene lay open.<sup>1</sup>

I confined myself to the assignment and regulation of work, to determining the emphasis and priority of particular supplies, to the comprehensive view of the war programmes, and to the initiation of special enterprises. After five months' experience of the new system I was able to say, 'I practically always approve a Council Committee report exactly as it comes. I think I have hardly ever altered a word. I read each report through with great attention and see the decision on the question, which I know is ever so much better than I could have produced myself, if I had studied it for two whole days.'

At the Ministry of Munitions I worked with incomparably the largest and most powerful staff in my experience. Here were gathered the finest business brains of the country working with might and main and with disinterested loyalty for the common cause. Many if not most of the leading men stood at the head of those industries which were most expanded by war needs. They therefore resigned altogether the immense fortunes which must inevitably have come to them, had they continued as private contractors. They served the State for honour alone. They were content to see men of lesser standing in their own industries amass great wealth and extend the scale of their business. In the service of the Crown there was a keen rivalry among them; and the position of Member of the Council with its general outlook was deeply prized. According to the Statute constituting the office, the whole authority rested with the Minister; but in practice the Council had a true collective responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> My minutes and memoranda of the time tell the story much better than any subsequent account which I could write. Accordingly from very large numbers I have selected enough to give a picture alike of the problem and of the movement of events. These will be found in Appendix M.

If in these pages I dwell with pride upon the extraordinary achievements of the Munitions Council in the field of supply, it is not to appropriate the credit. That belongs in the first instance to Mr. Lloyd George, who gathered together the great majority of these able men, and whose foresight in creating the national factories laid the foundations for subsequent production. It belongs also to the men who did the work, who quarried and shaped the stones, and to whose faithful, resourceful, untiring contrivance and exertion the Army and the nation owe a lasting debt.

It would be difficult and invidious for me to single out individuals among those who are still living. Their services have not been unrewarded by the Crown. But there is one who has gone from us to whom this account offers me the opportunity of paying tribute.

James Stevenson<sup>1</sup> was the most ingenious and compulsive manager and master of difficulties—material or personal—with whom I have ever served. Whether at the Ministry of Munitions or after the war when he accompanied me to the War Office and to the Colonial Office, no task however laborious, no problem however baffling, once it had been remitted to him, was ever a source of subsequent difficulty or complaint. With him, with his close colleague, Sir Arthur Duckham, and with the young, profound Professor Layton, who assembled and presented the weekly statistics, I was brought into the closest daily contact. These three constituted for me the mainspring, both of action and of review, by which the central control of the immense organization was exercised. Stevenson is dead. He died at fifty, worn out, as thoroughly as a brave soldier in the trenches, by his exertions in the public service. He left behind him a reputation, sustained by the opinion of Ministers of many Departments and of all Parties, for ability, integrity and devotion which should afford an example and an inspiration to the business men of Britain. To the deep appreciation of his work and gifts declared by those in a position to judge, I wish to add my testimony.

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The relief afforded by the new organization in the general business of supply gave me time to pursue my ideas upon mechanical attack. After the apparition of the tanks at the taking of Flers a year earlier, in September, 1916, and in the disappointment with which the end of the Somme battle oppressed the Cabinet, I had, though in nominal opposition, some credit in official circles. At the wish of the Minister of Munitions I had

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Lord Stevenson.

written a paper upon 'The greater application of mechanical power to the prosecution of an offensive on land.' Mr. Montagu had it printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence and circulated it to the Cabinet.

*November 9, 1916.*

1. The conditions of this war deny to the stronger power, whether on sea or land, its legitimate offensive scope. In all previous wars the stronger army was able to force matters to a final decision. The great developments of defensive power now prevent this.

2. We shall never have a superiority in numbers sufficient to triumph by itself. At present the fighting forces are much too evenly balanced. We have perhaps a superiority of five to four in fighting formations on all fronts, but the enemy's advantage of being on interior lines more than covers this. Even if we have a superiority of six to four, that will be insufficient, and we are not likely to see a greater superiority than this for a very long time.

3. Frontal attacks were abandoned forty years ago on account of the severity of fire. Now that the severity of fire has enormously increased and is constantly increasing, they are forced upon us in the absence of flanks.

4. Two methods of frontal attack have been tried. First the unlimited, as at Loos and Champagne, where the troops were given a distant objective behind the enemy's lines and told to march on that; and second, the limited form as tried by the Germans at Verdun, and by ourselves and the French on the Somme. Neither produces decisive results. The unlimited simply leads to the troops being brought up against uncut wire and undamaged machine guns. The limited always enables the enemy to move his artillery away, and to sell a very little ground at a heavy price in life, gaining time all the while to construct new defences in the rear.

8. An attack depends on two processes—

- (a) Blasting power and
- (b) Moving power;

blasting power is very well provided for in the constantly improving supplies of guns and shells, but moving power is in its infancy.

9. Two things stop the offensive movement of armies—

- (a) Bullets and fragments of shell which destroy the motive power of men, and
- (b) The confusion of the conflict.



15. A method of overcoming these difficulties exists. It may be shortly described as 'the attack by armoured vehicles.' I cannot pretend to do more than outline it and suggest it. I am not an inventor or designer. I have no means of testing and elaborating these ideas. Evidently they require study, experiment, and at least six months' preparation.

But now is the time in the winter to organize and perfect this method of attack. The 'Tanks' have shown the way. But they are only a beginning.<sup>1</sup>

A year had passed. Nothing had been done. Mr. Asquith's Government had fallen, Mr. Montagu was at the India Office and I had succeeded his successor at the Ministry of Munitions. I had therefore the chance and the duty of giving effect in one form or another to the project of a mechanical battle which I had advocated when a private member.

In the interval the tanks had been consistently misused by the generals, and their first prestige was markedly diminished. The War Office and General Headquarters had demanded from the Ministry of Munitions guns and shells on the basis of a thirty weeks' continuous British offensive in 1918. The sketch programmes which I found upon taking office were all framed on this assumption. No one contemplated such an event as a German offensive. The only question open was what was the best method of attacking the enemy. I drew up the following paper in the light of these acceptances.<sup>2</sup>

#### *To the War Cabinet.*

*October 21, 1917.*

1. In deciding upon the Munitions Programme for 1918, the first question to be answered is, 'What is the War Plan? When is it to reach its climax? Have we the possibility of winning in 1918, and if so, how are we going to do it? . . .

2. It is obvious that the defeat and breaking-up of the German armies in the West afford the best, the simplest and the swiftest method of arriving at decisive victory. The only question is, 'Have we the power to do it?' It would be a thousands pities to discard this direct and obvious method of victory in favour of weaker, more roundabout, protracted and far less decisive strategy, unless we are convinced that we have not the power to conquer on the Western Front. . . .

3. Ever since the autumn of 1914 we have heard the same accounts of the exhaustion of the enemy's man-power, of the decline of his morale, and of how near we stand, if we only

<sup>1</sup> The full text of this Memorandum is printed in Appendix N.

<sup>2</sup> The omitted paragraphs from this paper will be found in the second part of the Appendix mentioned in Note 1.

make the effort, to the supreme and final result. Every year we have in consequence made exertions on the greatest possible scale, and every year the close of the campaign has seen the enemy's front, however dinted, yet unbroken. But this in itself is by no means conclusive; for the effects of our efforts upon the enemy have been cumulative, the exhaustion of his man-power and the deterioration of his morale have been progressive; our superiority in munitions of all kinds has continually augmented; the offensive power of the British army has continually increased; that of the French is still formidable. The German armies in the West, on the other hand, appear to have completely lost their offensive power. The Germans have now been for four campaigns extended to their maximum war effort. They have maintained in continual battle upon all fronts armies of four or five millions of men. The very efficiency of their organization enabled them to strain themselves to their fullest compass from the outset, and the draft which they have made upon the life-energies of their whole nation is proportionately equal to and possibly greater than the draft which has been made upon the life-energies of France. We can measure the effect of the strain upon the French; and this affords perhaps the best guide to the actual remaining fighting power of Germany. Therefore it may well be that conclusions drawn from our disappointments in four successive campaigns would not apply to the fifth, and that the assertions and hopes that have proved unjustified in four successive campaigns might be vindicated in the end. For this reason it is imperative not to abandon the Western effort and resign ourselves to the formidable dangers involved in the prolongation of the war into 1919, without the most searching consideration of all our resources.

4. If we are to conquer in the West, we must for that purpose provide for the concentration of all our methods of attack upon the enemy simultaneously at the decisive period. . . .

5. Success can only be achieved by the *scale and intensity* of our offensive effort within a limited period. We are seeking to conquer the enemy's army and not his position; and one stroke must follow another so rapidly that no breathing space for recovery or recuperation is afforded. Unless the effort reaches and is maintained at the required degree of *intensity* or on a sufficiently large scale, the campaign will be indecisive like all the others, however successful and profitable individual battles may have been. It is this principle of the intensity of the effort during a culminating period which must govern all our calculations. With armies so large as those which confront

each other in the West, and with numerical superiority on our side which cannot be large, and may well be non-existent, a succession of heavy blows at intervals during the campaigning season may, however successful, result only in reciprocal losses without substantially altering the strategic situation. A policy of pure attrition between armies so evenly balanced cannot lead to a decision. It is not a question of wearing down the enemy's reserves, but of wearing them down so rapidly that recovery and replacement of shattered divisions is impossible. In a struggle between, say, 250 divisions on one side and 200 on the other, the small margin of superiority possessed by the stronger cannot be made to tell decisively before the winter respite is reached unless the war effort of the offensive reaches a far higher degree of general intensity than has hitherto been found possible. In other words, our attack must be of such a character that a division once used up *on either side* cannot reach the battle-front again during the culminating period in time to influence the conclusion. Unless this problem can be solved satisfactorily, we shall simply be wearing each other out on a gigantic scale and with fearful sacrifices, without ever reaping the reward.

6. It is clear that in 1918 we cannot hope for any large numerical superiority in men. The relief which will be afforded . . . to the German armies in the West by the collapse of Russia must be set against the reinforcement we shall receive from the United States. I have witnessed with profound disappointment the slow and frugal development of American fighting strength in France. From the day when America entered the war, the stream of American manhood, trained, half-trained, or untrained, to Europe should have been continuous, and all the available means of transportation should have been assembled and continually used to their utmost capacity—the men, of course, being properly trained either on one side of the Atlantic or the other. The melancholy decision to adopt a different form of armament, both for the infantry and artillery, has also seriously retarded the development of American war power. This is now being realized by the American authorities, but too late. We cannot therefore count on any great superiority in numbers on the Western Front in 1918. Our calculations must proceed upon an assumption that there will be no decisive preponderance in the number of formed divisions or in the number of men in the line or in the reserves available within the year. We are however entitled to count upon a marked and possibly increasing superiority in quality and morale. There remain in addition only the great province of war machinery and the

resources of superior generalship operating through war machinery. Will these suffice?

7. There are six principal forms of machinery by which our infantry on the Western Front (slightly superior in numbers, markedly superior in quality) may be aided, viz.:—

Artillery preponderance,  
Air supremacy,  
Railway or mechanical mobility,  
Trench-mortar development,  
Tank development,  
Gas development.

In what way can these be combined and applied by generalship so as to produce the maximum intensity of offensive power during the culminating period? . . .

## V.

25. It should not be supposed that victory in the West depends indispensably on a large superiority in numbers. When one army, partly from superiority in numbers, partly from superiority in morale, feels itself decidedly the stronger, it seeks to assume the offensive. What is lacking is an effective method of the offensive. A very large superiority in numbers would of course be one way, but we have no prospect of getting this. Three or four times the artillery we have at present would be another method; but there is no prospect of getting this in the immediate future. Still, if a means could be found whereby the stronger and better army could advance continuously *and at a sufficient speed* on a front of twenty or thirty miles, a general retirement would unquestionably be forced upon the German armies.

26. How then are we to find this method of continuous offensive, which is the inherent right of the stronger and better army, and the absence of which is the sole cause of the prolongation of the war? We have at present only the artillery. If you concentrate the bulk of the artillery of a great nation on a narrow battle-front and feed it with the whole industry of the people, it is possible to pound and pulverize certain areas of ground, so that a limited advance can certainly be made. But the artillery is so local in its action, so costly in its use, and so ponderous in its movement that the rate of the advance has not hitherto led to any decisive strategic results. It is clear, therefore that the artillery alone is not sufficient, and will never be sufficient, to impart to the stronger army the certain and irresistible means of advancing which it requires. It is becoming apparent that the 'blasting power' of the

artillery is only one of the factors required for a satisfactory method of the offensive. 'Moving power' must be developed equally with 'blasting power.' 'Moving power' deserves as sustained a study, as extensive an application, and as large a share of our resources as have hitherto been given to the 'blasting power' of the artillery.

'Moving power,' in the shape of railways, motor transport, light railways and tramways, has already attained large dimensions up to the edge of the battlefield; but 'moving power' *on the battlefield itself* is practically limited to the arms and legs of human beings. This is not enough, and it never will be enough, and until it can be supplemented *on the battlefield* by machinery of one kind or another which can be brought into being and kept in working order in spite of intense battle conditions, the stronger army will remain robbed of its method of advance.

29. If we may assume a stronger and better army equally equipped with 'blasting power' and 'moving power,' and capable of operating continuously on a front sufficiently broad, its success would not necessarily be dependent upon the relative numbers of troops available on either side in the whole theatre of war. Whatever his strength in other parts, the enemy would be under a continual imperative obligation of arresting this offensive movement on a given front. Someone must stop the tiger. If the rate of advance was sufficiently rapid, lack of a great superiority in numbers would not paralyse the attackers; and even bringing superior numbers to the spot would not help the defenders. For the defensive, even more than for the offensive, the numbers of men which can be usefully employed in given areas of ground is severely limited. Just as it may be said that the 'intensity' of the offensive all along the front should be such as to make the whole line rock and keep the enemy in continual movement and uncertainty, so the rate of progress of the attack on the main battlefield and the obstruction of communications behind it should be sufficient to prevent reinforcement before essential points are lost.

30. When we see these great armies in the West spread out in thin lines hundreds of miles long and organized in depth only at very few points, it is impossible to doubt that if one side discovered, developed, and perfected a definite method of advancing continuously, albeit upon a fairly limited front, a decisive defeat would be inflicted upon the other. If therefore we could by organized mechanical processes and equipment impart this faculty to our armies in 1918 or in 1919, it would be an effective substitute for a great numerical preponderance

in numbers. What other substitute can we look for? Where else is our superiority coming from?

31. A survey of these mechanical possibilities together with a computation of our resources compared to those of the enemy should afford the best means of judging the fateful question already postulated, viz., whether we have the means of overthrowing finally the enemy's main armies on the Western Front during the campaign of 1918. . . .

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MUNITIONS BUDGET

Competing Needs and Rival Authorities—The Priorities Committee—Resources and Demands—Duplication and Waste of Effort—Over-insurance—Memorandum on the Munitions Budget—Tonnage: Iron Ore—Allocation of Steel—Distribution of Labour—Explosives—Chemical Warfare—Guns and Ammunition—The Rival Artilleries on the Western Front—Aeroplanes ; Tanks ; Dollars—Summary of Recommendations—Ship Plates and the Tank Programme—An Unexpected Cut in Tonnage—Efforts to Retrieve the Loss—Letter to the Shipping Controller—Pressure on the French—Recasting the Programme—A Note to the War Cabinet—All ends well.

**B**Y the middle of October the Munitions Council had completed a comprehensive study of the whole of our material resources to which I had directed their efforts. I was therefore able to frame the Munitions Budget for the coming year. The difficulties of this task far exceeded those of the budgets for which Chancellors of the Exchequer are usually responsible. The enormous variety of needs for which provision must be made could be surmounted by systematized collective study. But the fierce rivalry of so many authorities, and the dependence of our programmes upon the decisions of others, made the work complicated and baffling in the last degree.

In one quarter of our horizon stood the Shipping Controller, Sir Joseph Maclay, a most able Glasgow shipowner with deep knowledge, a charming personality and the unbounded confidence of Mr. Bonar Law. He estimated the maximum tonnage available for all purposes ; and his figures, framed in a conservative and Caledonian spirit, were accepted by the War Cabinet. In another quarter stood the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Bonar Law, one of the all-powerful Triumvirate. He also took, as was his duty, an extremely restrained view of the limits of dollar credits, both in the United States and Canada. To anything we could buy in Britain the Treasury interposed no obstacle ; but we could not realize our programmes unless we were able to make very large purchases of steel from the United States, of unfilled shells from Canada and of nitrates from Chili. Thirdly, there arose the Minister of National Service, Sir Auckland Geddes, whose duty it was—outside a large field over which the Ministry of Munitions reigned—to apportion all the available

man power and to provide the recruits for the fighting services. Last, and not least of all, loomed the portentous figure of Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty, charged with the paramount duties of maintaining the Fleet, of crushing the U-boats and of rebuilding the Mercantile Marine. For these purposes the Admiralty was armed not only with Absolute Priority, but possessed a monopoly control over all the firms with which they were accustomed to deal. This priority was interpreted so harshly that skilled men had to be found on one occasion for potato-peeling machines for the Grand Fleet, while they were actually being withdrawn from making range-finders for the anti-aircraft guns.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the War Office and the Air Ministry towards us was somewhat different. They lived by our supplies, and to that extent were on our side. They not only demanded the supplies on an ever-increasing scale, but they also simultaneously demanded as recruits for the fighting forces the workmen, skilled and unskilled, without which these supplies could not be produced. Against all these potentates the Ministry of Munitions sallied out to do battle. Over everybody's head, as was proper, the War Cabinet, a final court of appeal. But the business of the court was heavily congested, and neither its time nor its temper was unlimited. There was therefore set up in the autumn of 1917 the 'Priorities Committee,' presided over by General Smuts. On this the Departments fought and tore for every ton of steel and freight. Never, I suspect, in all the vicissitudes of his career has General Smuts stood more in need of those qualities of tact and adroitness for which among his many virtues he is renowned.

One of my difficulties was in having to argue on so many fronts at once. Facts and reasoning used in one direction for one purpose could be quoted in resistance to another. Because I had thought it right on a general view of the situation to urge that strong efforts should be made to re-equip the Italian armies after Caporetto, I was forever confronted with the argument, 'If you can spare all that for the Italians, you cannot be so badly off yourself.' Or again, in the fight to secure a handful of steel plates for the tank programme, we encountered at first the odious statement: 'But the Army doesn't want any more; General Headquarters does not rank them very high in their priorities; they have not done well at Passchendaele; they cannot cope with the mud, etc.'

The War Cabinet, and particularly the Prime Minister, always took a great interest in tanks. At the end of the year after the Battle of Cambrai this became accentuated. They recorded the most solemn adjurations upon the importance of tank construc-

<sup>1</sup> This was of course corrected when discovered.



tion with the utmost speed and in the largest numbers. But at the same time they ruled that the Admiralty demand for ship plates for the Mercantile Marine, which was several hundred times greater than would ever be needed for tanks, should retain their super-priority. Since we were unable to overcome Sir Eric Geddes by reason, it became necessary to gorge him with ship plates. This the Munitions Council and Sir John Hunter's steel department soon succeeded in doing. The Admiralty's merchant shipbuilding programme of three million tons in twelve months proved far beyond even their very great and splendid activities. We watched with unsleeping attention the accumulations which soon began of ship plates in every yard. Not until the moment was ripe did we unmask the guilty fact. The effect was decisive. The proud Department condescended to parley, and eventually the modest requirements of the tank programme were satisfied.

Surveying the whole process in retrospect, I have no doubt it was not—apart from the privileged position of the Admiralty—either unhealthy or inefficient. It would have been better, as I vehemently argued, to assign the whole sphere of man-power to the Ministry of National Service and the whole sphere of material to the Ministry of Munitions, and for the War Cabinet to have adjudicated upon the main distribution. The one great blot upon the high economy of the British war effort in the last year of the struggle was the undue and unwarrantable inroads upon the common fund made by the Admiralty. That they accomplished vital tasks cannot be denied. But when a nation is fighting for its life, the honour lies not in securing the lion's share, but in a just apportionment of limited resources.

#### DUPLICATION AND WASTE OF EFFORT.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*November 6, 1917.*

IF we are to realize the full war effort of this country in 1918 and in 1919, it is indispensable that the most searching economy of men and material should be practised in every direction and by every Department; that no services should be duplicated; that no more should be taken for any service, however necessary, than is required; and that one central and superior view should regulate every portion of our defensive and offensive system. Unless we are to be confronted with a failure in munitions and shipbuilding, and with a very serious diminution in our potential war-making capacity, it is necessary that there should be a general stocktaking.

Those members of the War Cabinet or Government who were members of the Committee of Imperial Defence in the

years before the war are of course familiar with every aspect of the 'Invasion' argument. I will therefore content myself with drawing attention to a few simple facts.

During the early months of the war, especially at the beginning, when Germany had the greatest incentive to try to throw a raiding army across the North Sea, we had as our defence against invasion:—

1. The Fleet, with a margin of eight Dreadnoughts.
2. Our submarines and flotillas.
3. Two, and then one, and finally no regular divisions.
4. The Territorial Army, newly mobilized, with hardly any machine guns, with 15-pounder artillery and scarcely any reserves of ammunition, and gunners almost unskilled.
5. No coast fortifications and only a few guns in open batteries at the defended forts.
6. No mine-fields.
7. Practically no aircraft.

*In these circumstances the Germans did not choose or did not venture to make an oversea attack.*

We now have:—

1. The British Fleet, with a margin of about twenty Dreadnoughts.
2. The American Battle Fleet (the third strongest in the world) if we require it.
3. Enormous mine-fields, covering the German debouches and hampering the movement even of submarine craft.
4. Submarines and flotillas multiplied manifold.
5. The coast-line fortified from end to end with powerful batteries mounted at every port *and still being increased*. Powerful aeroplane forces and a perfect system of coastal watch.
6. A defence scheme devised by Lord French himself, according to the latest experience of this war.
7. A Home Army mostly in its actual battle stations, aggregating a quarter of a million men and supported by a powerful field artillery of upwards of 500 modern guns and howitzers, with boundless supplies of ammunition and enormous numbers of organized mobile or sited machine guns.
8. A million and a quarter other armed and uniformed men behind these.
9. The Volunteers.

Security is no doubt vital, but it must be remembered that if

the factor of safety is exaggerated in any one part of our organization, other parts may be exposed to fatal peril ; and that if our strength is dissipated in making sure three or four times over in one direction, we may fail to have the strength available for the general offensive war, and may consequently be compelled impotently to witness the defeat of our Allies one by one.

The very serious situation of the war and the impossibility on present lines of securing any effective numerical superiority or any sufficiently large mechanical superiority over the German armies in the field compel me to bring these aspects of our present arrangements to the notice of the War Cabinet.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days earlier I had presented the 'Munitions Budget' to the Cabinet. As it covers and explains so many aspects of our war plans and efforts, I reprint it almost in full.

TO THE WAR CABINET.

MUNITIONS BUDGET FOR 1918.

(PROVISIONAL.)

*November 1, 1917.*

1. THE foundation of the Munitions Budget is Tonnage ; the ground floor is Steel ; and the limiting factor in construction is Labour.

The period covered by this Budget is, broadly speaking, from now to the end of the 1918 offensive, and the figures relate precisely to the twelve months from the 15th November, 1917, to the 15th November, 1918.

2. The following are the principal demands made by the fighting departments upon the Ministry of Munitions for the campaign of 1918 compared with 1917:—

- (i) The demand of the War Office for the completion of their programme involving a 40 per cent. further increase in the striking power of the artillery, both in guns and ammunition.
- (ii) The demand of the Admiralty for doubled shipbuilding materials.
- (iii) The demand of the Air Board for tripled aeronautical supplies.

3. *Tonnage.*—The programmes as proposed require the delivery here of 1,100,000 tons per month for munitions alone (*i.e.* apart from items for other departments included in our tonnage allocation). To secure this there should be assigned to us for all purposes 1,300,000 tons of shipping a month. I propose to place orders abroad somewhat in advance of this

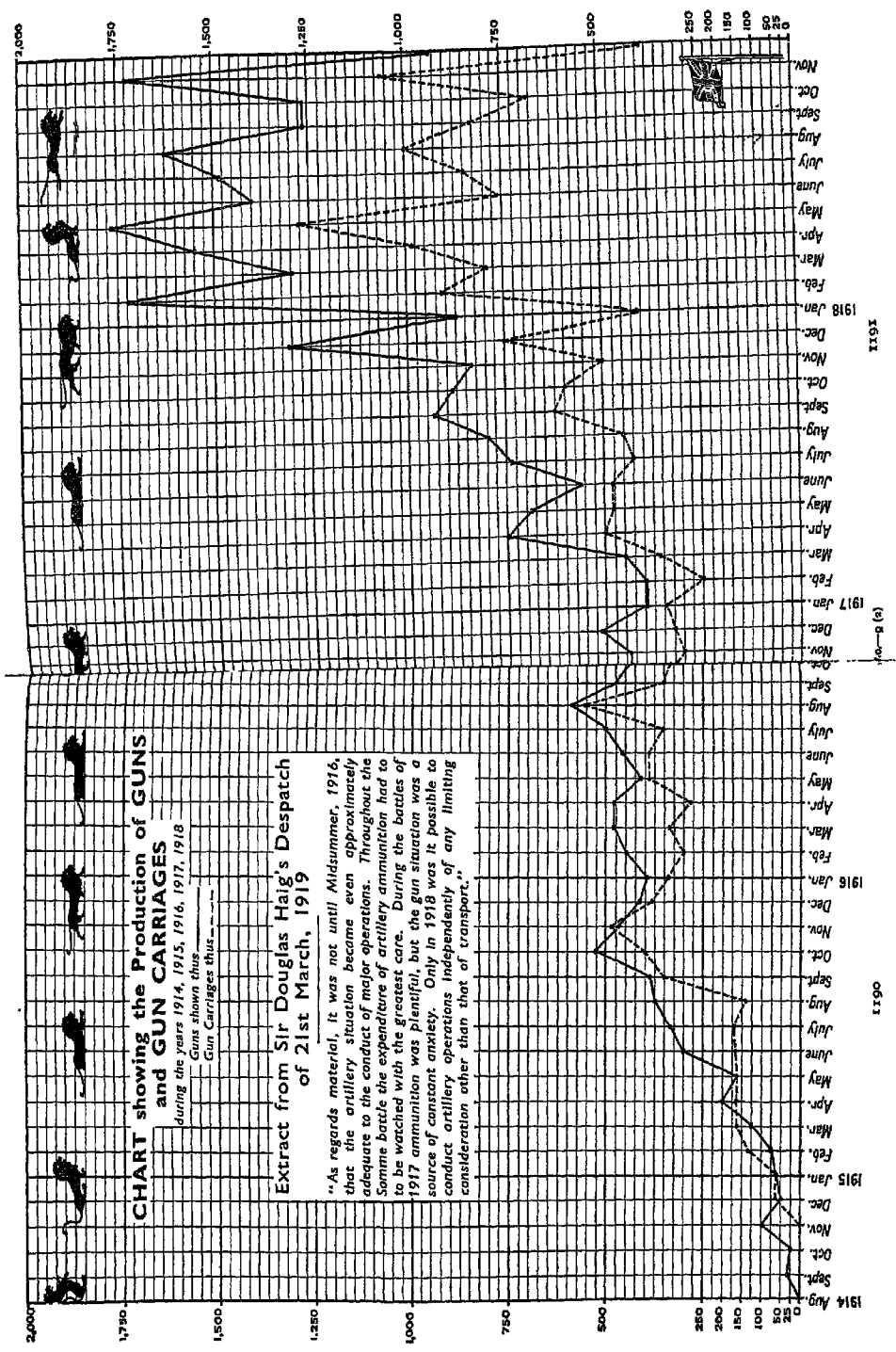


figure. If the shipping falls off, the material ordered will be received more slowly. It is better to have a moderate surplus of orders awaiting shipment than not to have the tonnage fully occupied with vitally needed materials.

4. *Iron Ore*.—More than half our total munitions imports consist of iron ore. The blast furnaces could deal with a monthly importation of 735,000 tons of Spanish and Swedish (mainly hematite) ore, and with a monthly home production of 1,500,000 tons of (mainly basic) ore. On the above tonnage basis I count only on getting 635,000 tons of ore, viz.: 550,000 tons from Spain, and 85,000 tons from Sweden. There is a good reserve of Swedish ore, which can be drawn upon in case of need. I estimate that the home production will average over 1,500,000 tons a month.

5. *Steel*.—On this basis we can produce in the year approximately 8,500,000 tons of finished steel product. Orders are being placed for 1,000,000 tons of steel from the United States (included in our tonnage requirements). Arrangements have also been made with the French and with the Shipping Controller to carry approximately 500,000 tons of French Shell Steel already purchased in America which we should otherwise have had to supply from home sources. Having regard to this rearrangement of supplies it may be said that our steel production in relation to our needs and our commitments to the Allies is equivalent to 10,000,000 tons. Out of this every requirement must be met, and if through shipping shrinkage the total production is reduced, all programmes will be affected.

6. *Allocation of Steel*.—Shipbuilding is the first charge on our steel resources. Orders have been given that the rolling mills are to be kept constantly fed to their full and increasing capacity, and that sections and other shipbuilding components shall be supplied in their proper proportion to the output of plates assigned to the Admiralty, until such time as the shipyards are provided with material to their full capacity. An agreement has been reached with the Admiralty after a full disclosure of figures whereby a portion of our rolling-mill production, varying from 7,000 to 8,500 tons a week, shall be reserved for all non-Admiralty services (including the War Office and the civilian needs of the country) and the whole of the rest of the production assigned to Admiralty needs. We have already succeeded in raising the Admiralty supply of plates from 16,000 tons a week in July to an average of 20,000 tons a week at the end of September, and subject to their capacity we shall still further raise them gradually up to at least 27,000 tons a week in October, 1918. This with other shipbuilding material to be supplied during the period under forecast is equivalent to a

construction of from 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 tons of merchant shipping in addition to warship construction. The twelve months' Admiralty allocation of steel aggregates approximately 2,000,000 tons.

The next principal draft on our Steel Budget is shells. On the programme demanded by the War Office this requires approximately 2,500,000 tons for Great Britain.

The requirements of the Allies for steel of all classes have been cut down to about 700,000 tons in the year, chiefly by the arrangement to ship 500,000 tons of shell steel from the U.S.A. to France. The other direct munition requirements, including aircraft, guns, military railways, tanks, steel-works extensions, &c., are approximately 2,200,000 tons. The War Office, the India Office, and certain other Departments require approximately 600,000 tons, leaving 1,500,000 tons for construction, machinery, and the so-called civilian services of the country, most of which are intimately related to munitions production.

These civilian requirements are mostly for the purpose of the maintenance and repair of plant and works in this country. Among these the upkeep of our railways and rolling-stock is the most important. For some considerable time the supplies to meet these demands have been cut down to the lowest possible figure, and if this is continued for much longer the position is likely to become serious. This, with the 500,000 tons of French steel shipped direct from America, balances a steel budget of 10,000,000 tons. . . .

7. *Labour*.—The prospective labour requirements resulting from the preceding Admiralty, War Office, and Aircraft programmes amount in the aggregate to—

Skilled men, 25,000 (10,000 for aircraft).

Unskilled men, 58,000 (40,000 for aircraft and 8,000 for steel works).

Women, 70,000 (50,000 for aircraft).

In addition to these demands the Admiralty are asking for 12,500 skilled men and 67,500 unskilled men; the War Office require 15,000 artificers, of whom about 8,000 can be met from among men already in the army, leaving a balance of 7,000, of whom 5,000-6,000 have still to be supplied by the Ministry [of Munitions]. . . .

To meet the demand for skilled men, the Ministry has at its disposal a total of 210,000 transferable men, of whom over 50 per cent. are at present employed on important war work. Even the balance cannot be considered to be immediately available for transfer, inasmuch as a considerable proportion of them are engaged in sugar refineries, collieries, food production, and other indispensable occupations.

Nevertheless, the process of dilution is steadily, though slowly, extending, and as industries are accommodating themselves to the war conditions, the productivity of a given quantity of labour tends to rise. Since the March Agreement the Ministry of Munitions have, while continually increasing output, released 53,000 general service men for the army as against 700 released by the Admiralty and 700 from War Office contracts.

I am therefore advised that, so far as the demand for skilled labour for the purely munitions programme is concerned, the requirements can be met without serious dislocation. This is however subject to the three following conditions:—

- (a) A modification of the Admiralty claim that no man can be transferred from the work on which he is at present engaged for the Admiralty.

This demand means in effect that the whole of the skilled labour required for the new shipbuilding programme must be drawn exclusively from Munitions work.

- (b) A severe limitation on the demands of the Army for recruits for artificers corps from among skilled men working on munitions.

- (c) The co-operation of the skilled engineering Unions in a more extensive dilution on war work. . . .

I do not anticipate any difficulty in finding the women required.

8. *Explosives*.—This is even more an explosives war than it is a steel war. Steel is the principal vehicle by which explosives are conveyed to the enemy. The requirements of propellant are limited by the production of shell, but there are other methods, besides those of artillery, of delivering high explosives to the enemy. The capacity of our existing high explosives plant is at present in excess of our shell programme for 1918. It has been arranged to supplement the present system of discharging high explosives by providing up to a maximum 1,000 tons a week of bombs to be dropped from aeroplanes. The possibility of extending the Trench Mortar offensive power of our Army is also being examined. To utilize fully our existing high-explosive plants it is necessary that we should ship from Chile approximately 788,000 tons of nitrates; at present the tonnage for only 600,000 has provisionally been agreed upon.

New and very serious demands for T.N.T. are also being made by the Admiralty for mines.

9. *Chemical Warfare*.—G.H.Q. has asked that we should add an irritant gas to our lethal and lachrymatory gases. Development of this new branch of chemical warfare will take many months and cannot come fully into play until the end of next

year's campaign. Using all possible resources of chemical shell with existing types of chemical, we could supply the army next year with  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the quantity of gas shell supplied in the 1917 campaign.

If the present scheme for the new gas matures, the whole supply of chemical shell would be four times as great by the end of 1918 as in 1917.

10. *Guns and Ammunition.*—On the above basis of steel and explosives, together with importations of finished shells and components, it will be possible to meet the Commander-in-Chief's full demand both for guns and shells as set out in his letter of the 17th July. . . .

11. Before rejoicing at these facts it is necessary to compare the British, French and German artilleries. During 1917 the French and ourselves have maintained about an equal number of combatants in the line in France, and we have done the harder fighting. The French had however on the 1st October 10,000 guns to our 6,000 guns, ours, on the whole, being heavier and newer. The new French heavy artillery programme is now coming into bearing, and from now on they anticipate very large monthly deliveries. By April, 1918, the French will have 9,000 guns, all modern and steadily increasing. Our comparable figure in the field in France will be approaching 8,000, which is the maximum establishment that our army has at present arranged for. Our infantry will not therefore be quite so well supported with artillery as the French.

The War Office state that the Germans had in 1917—

	Guns.					
On the French front	...	...	...	...	...	12,432
On the Russian front	...	...	...	...	...	5,176
Balkans and Italy	...	...	...	...	...	808
Total	...	...	...	...	...	18,416 <sup>1</sup>

The balance on the Western front was as follows:—

Franco-British	...	...	...	...	...	15,969
German	...	...	...	...	...	12,432

But though we had a superiority in numbers, the Germans had superior weight of metal. Deducting from each side field guns, in which we are greatly superior, the balance in heavier and more important weapons stood as follows:—

Franco-British	...	...	...	...	...	6,654
German	...	...	...	...	...	7,568

<sup>1</sup> General von Wrisberg, Head of the Principal Department of the Prussian War Ministry, in his book *Heer und Heimath* (Army and Home) published in 1924, p. 58, says: 'The greatest number of [German] heavy guns on the front was in February, 1917: Heavy 7,130. Field guns and Field howitzers, 10,836. Total, 17,966.'

This is a remarkable instance of the accuracy of the British War Office information.



If the new British and French programmes are carried out punctually we should have in the West by April, 1918, 17,000 modern and 2,000 older guns with steady increases in prospect.

The Germans will have their present 12,432 guns, plus—

(a) Any new programme they are making.

(b) Any of the 5,176 guns they may choose to take from the Russian front.

(c) Any of the 2,000 or 3,000 guns recently captured from the Russians or Italians.

It is certain therefore that with our utmost efforts, and under the most favourable conditions, we cannot expect any superiority in guns next year.

It does not follow however that the ammunition for all the German guns will be as abundant as ours.

Nor on the other hand, being on the defensive, need they use it so copiously or continuously.

All these facts appear to me to be worthy of profound consideration.

12. The most striking deficiency in the British artillery is found in very heavy long-range guns. On the 1st October the position was as follows:—

Very heavy guns (9.2-in. and 12-in.)—

German	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	180
French	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	175
British	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6

There is only one source to which we can look to improve the long-range heavy battery at the disposal of our troops, viz., the Navy.

If we could receive from Naval sources and from our Fortresses during the next six months 100 heavy guns (including 30 already promised), *i.e.* 14-inch, new 13.5-inch, or 12-inch of all marks, and 100 medium guns, *i.e.* 10-inch and 9.2-inch, it would be possible, without prejudice to the programmes, to make a very substantial addition to the British long-range heavy artillery.

I ask that this may be earnestly examined.

13. *Aeroplanes.*—It is understood that the programme of the Royal Flying Corps provides for the equipment of the following:—

By December, 1917,	85	active squadrons.
By March, 1918,	106	" "
By June, 1918,	149	" "
By December, 1918,	200	" "

This programme, together with a total of 3,000 aeroplanes required by the R.N.A.S. by August, 1918, and 9,500 by the R.F.C. for training purposes, involves a total production by that date of between 27,000 and 28,000 machines of all kinds. In

order to obtain this result our output in the summer of 1918 should be at the rate of 2,700 per month. . . .

14. *Tanks*.—Tanks have never yet been used in numbers under conditions favourable to their action. Nor have we ever yet had a sufficiently reliable kind of tank, nor nearly enough of them. If they have held their own in 1917 it has been under adverse circumstances, both in their production here and their use in France.

In consequence the army consider that they cannot allocate more than 18,500 men to the tank corps. This limits the number of fighting tanks required to an establishment of 1,080 with ample maintenance and a certain number of supply and gun-carrying tanks.

There will be no difficulty in supplying this requirement, but the new designs will not be available in full numbers until July, 1918. Thereafter considerable expansions would be possible. The demand made by tanks on steel and skilled labour is small and does not sensibly affect either shipbuilding or aeroplanes.

15. *Dollars*.—We have been forced by the shortage of Canadian and American dollars to reduce our orders in Canada and the United States to considerably lower figures than hitherto. Shell-producing and explosives plants have had to be demobilized in Canada almost as soon as they had been called into being, and thus we have had to do without most valuable additions to our resources for which labour and material were available. We cannot buy more than 8 millions sterling a month on the average in 1918 from the United States, instead of an average of 13 millions in the first half of 1917; nor more than 6 millions a month in Canada, compared to 9½ millions. This curtailment of our resources must be borne in mind.

16. To sum up, the present adverse factors to munitions production are as follows:—

- (i) The increasing demands of the Admiralty.
- (ii) The general shortage of labour (especially skilled labour) and the risk of pressing labour hard at the present time.
- (iii) The curtailment of our orders in Canada and the United States on financial grounds.
- (iv) The low level to which we have been compelled to restrict our iron ore importations.

On the other hand, the immense new plants begun in the first year of the Ministry of Munitions are being utilized to their full advantage and are steadily developing their output of various munitions.

The power of massed production and the increasing efficiency of diluted and female labour, together with the accumulation of

working stocks and adequate reserves and the progressive elimination of commercial work, render possible a large increase in the total output so long as the necessary tonnage and labour required are forthcoming.

17. In spite therefore of the difficulties, it should still be possible, by taking the proper measures of organization, by enforcing the necessary economies, and by utilizing to the full the resources of every department without exception, to meet and satisfy the main demands that are made upon us.

There still remain as new objectives of effort within the bounds of possibility and without undue prejudice to the above:—

- (i) Increased long-range aeroplane bombing power.
- (ii) Increased long-range mobile and semi-mobile heavy artillery.
- (iii) Increased trench-mortar offensive.
- (iv) Increased tank development late in the year.
- (v) Increased chemical warfare supplies.

18. There are however four principles which must be accepted and resolutely applied:—

- (i) The tonnage utilized for non-military imports of all kinds, including to some extent food, must be cut down.
- (ii) The Admiralty must endeavour to find the bulk of its own skilled labour for shipbuilding from its own extensive resources, and it must subject every part of its immense organization to a loyal and searching scrutiny in the general interest.
- (iii) The dormant man-power of the units of the Home army must be made effective as an aid to transport, industry, and agriculture.
- (iv) The business of supply must be properly co-ordinated. We cannot afford the waste which arises from the independent and competitive action of individual departments.

No sooner had we completed the Munitions Budget, with its innumerable apportionments and orders, than the startling news arrived that the Inter-Allied Commission on Food Supplies, on which the War Cabinet was represented, had allocated, at the earnest request of the French Minister of Commerce, no less than two million tons of freight for the transport of additional food for France and Italy. Nearly the whole—1,550,000 tons—had to be cut off the Munitions share. I reacted violently against this. The threat to France and Italy of drastic reductions in the steel we had promised them enlisted the active aid of the Munitions Ministers of both countries. A considerable portion of these self-indulgent importations were eventually cancelled. But heavy cuts had to

be made in shell steel, and the Army was warned to expect a reduced programme.

The outlook and the immediate pressure led me, in my own sphere, to seek by every shift and from every quarter to increase our steel resources on which the British armies depended. No doubt from the higher position of the War Cabinet a more general view of relative requirements could be taken, and my appeals and protests imply no criticism of others. It was my duty above all to keep Sir Douglas Haig supplied with every requisite, and at this we slaved and struggled from daybreak to midnight. We were well ahead with shells of nearly every kind. We were well ahead with rifles and rifle ammunition. During all the autumn the armies had had all the shell they demanded, but the prolonged firing of Passchendaele and the destruction of battle had so seriously worn out our field and medium artillery that guns had become the limiting factor. Immense replacements and repairs had to be made in the brief interval between November and the spring.

*To the Chancellor of the Exchequer.*

*November 25, 1917.*

The position which has been created by the surrender of 2,000,000 tons of shipping to the food supply of France and the consequent reduction on Munitions imports (almost exclusively steel and iron-ore) of upwards of 1,550,000 tons, is so disastrous in its consequences upon the offensive power of the British armies next year, and indeed upon our whole war-making capacity, that I cannot accept it without using every conceivable effort to minimize the disaster. If the *volume* of our tonnage is to be reduced, it is indispensable that the *value* of it should, as far as possible, be enhanced. This raises the whole Canadian position. There is no more melancholy chapter in the history of British Munitions Supply than the laborious creation of large and vitally needed shell plants in Canada, only for them to be dispersed and destroyed at the moment they have come into bearing. . . . Shortage of dollars, and dollars only, was the cause of this misfortune. . . . Surely the truth ought to be known, and further efforts made to avert the loss which is impending. There could be no more short-sighted and even mad policy than to damp down and break up these Canadian plants at the very time when the increasing demands of the United States for their own armies threaten to exclude us very largely from that field. I am now confronted both with American proposals for placing orders in Canadian Munition Factories, and with additional offers of shell and other essential munitions from Canada. Are you really going to be content to

let this all go by the board? Here for instance are proposals from the Governor-General of Canada to utilize the Ross Rifle Factory for the manufacture of machine-gun barrels. This would be of the greatest service to us. Both the Colonial Office and the Governor-General are pressing for a reply. Again, there is an offer for 25,000 6-inch shells a week additional from Canada. These are the shells which are most needed by our troops at the present time, in regard to which I have just received a fresh demand for 2,000,000 from the Commander-in-Chief. The machinery in Canada is available, the labour is available, the material is available—the need is most grave. Are we really to let the plant be scattered and the machines to drift over piecemeal into the United States and so cut ourselves off for ever from this source of highly portable munitions of the most necessary character? I know how great your difficulties are and how strenuous have been the exertions which you have made to procure us larger credits, but I really cannot accept this decision departmentally from the Treasury and make myself the agent of its announcement. It seems to me that the responsibility in a matter of this kind could only be assumed by the War Cabinet, and I hope you will not mind my asking that the matter should definitely be brought before them. Neither in man-power nor in war material are we putting out our full energies, and having regard to the reserves which the Germans will be able to bring back in both troops and artillery next year from the Russian front, the position of our armies may be most serious. Perhaps in the first instance we could have a small private conference at the Treasury, to which I would bring various experts.

*To Sir Joseph Maclay (Controller of Shipping).*

*November 25, 1917.*

You must pardon my anxiety about the importations of iron-ore. The decisions which have been taken without my being even informed, to give 2,000,000 tons of shipping to the French and Italian food supply, have shattered our means of furnishing the armies in the field with the ammunition they require for 1918. They will also force me to notify to the French and Italians an entire suspension of the allocation to them of steel products of all kinds, although used exclusively for military purposes. This will unquestionably create a serious diplomatic position. I was informed in Paris that the French were astonished at the liberality of our concessions to them in the matter of food.

It is scarcely possible to do justice to the disastrous position created by the cut of 1,550,000 tons on munition imports, and the lamentable crippling of our otherwise available resources in

war power which that entails. Can you wonder therefore that I am exerting myself by every means to procure some amelioration of this state of things? I am advised by experts of unimpeachable authority that ferro-concrete barges of a seaworthy character could have been constructed many months ago and that they could have been so employed as to afford a direct relief to certain classes of tonnage. Even now I do not think they are being sufficiently developed. Only 70 I understand have been ordered, whereas at least double the number are required. A deficiency of British shipping and our liberality to our Allies may not be our business at the Ministry of Munitions, but it is undoubtedly our misfortune. As it is, the plans of the Commander-in-Chief are being vitiated and the offensive power of the British armies very seriously impaired. I say nothing of the economic difficulties which will be created in England through the failure to maintain the Railways and other essential Civil Services through the deficiency of steel.

*To Monsieur Loucheur (Minister of Armaments, France).*

*November 25, 1917.*

I have referred your letter of the 20th of November to the study of the departments concerned, and I will communicate with you as soon as I have their observations on its detail. The whole steel situation in Great Britain has however been revolutionized by the decision to allocate 2,000,000 tons of British shipping to carry food supplies to France and Italy. The direct consequence of this has been to reduce the estimated importation for the Ministry of Munitions by 1,550,000 tons up to the present time, and practically the whole of this is taken from our importations of ore and of steel. It is therefore quite impossible for me to continue to supply the 40,000 tons of various steel products to France as previously agreed between us. I have to impose the most severe reductions on the supply of ammunition for the British Armies, reducing the weight of shell to be fired in 1918 by between half a million and 750,000 tons, and a further very severe reduction has to be imposed upon our already depleted railway and other vital domestic services. In these circumstances, I can only supply France with steel products in 1918 to the extent to which tonnage is placed at my disposal in abatement of the 1,550,000 tons reduction. If, for instance, it is in your power to procure a retrocession of half a million or 300,000 tons of tonnage allocated to French food stuffs, I can continue my supplies of steel to that extent, as the liberated tonnage will be used to bring in the necessary quantities of ore and steel to us. But failing this or some similar arrangement, it is absolutely impossible for me, with the

tonnage allocated at present, to continue supplies of steel for French purposes. I am of course making a similar communication to the Italian Government so far as next year is concerned, and apart from the immediate measures which are required to meet the emergency caused by their disaster.

I should add that if the position improves from any cause, and especially from a reduction in the net weekly loss by submarine sinkings, I shall of course be ready to contribute towards your programmes to the best of my ability.

While awaiting the results of this outcry, it was necessary to face the facts. I gave the following instructions:—

*Secretary.*

*S.*

*M.*

*Clamping Committee.<sup>1</sup>*

*November 25, 1917.*

The cut in the importations of iron-ore is so serious that every effort must be made to mitigate its consequences. There must be great masses of iron in one form and another scattered about the country. Take for instance all the park and area railings. I should suppose there were 20,000 tons of iron in the Hyde Park railings alone, while the weight of metal in the area railings of the London streets must be enormous. The same is true of many great towns throughout the country. Then there is the building material of unfinished buildings, girders, etc., which could be worked up into other urgently needed Works of Construction for military purposes. A few strands of barbed wire could be used to protect areas and enclosed parks. Drastic action will help to rouse people to a sense of the emergency and of the magnitude of the effort required. Thirdly, there are the battlefields. There must be 700,000 or 800,000 tons of shell-steel lying about on the Somme battlefields alone. The collection of this is vital. The proper machines must be constructed. A smelting plant should be set up on the battle-fields.

Let me have definite recommendations for immediate action on all these points with the least possible delay, and advise me as to the composition of a suitable committee, not consisting of members of Council, which can carry out any policy decided on.

*Clamping Committee.*

*November 26, 1917.*

You should recast the Programme on the following assumptions:—

(1) That the armies in France only fire in 1918 the same weight of shell as they fired in 1917.

<sup>1</sup> So called by me because it was charged with fitting the programme together.

(2) That all additional shell that our iron and steel import permits of should be stored for a 1919 climax.

(3) That explosives needs will be reduced by the reduction on the Programme of artillery firing.

(4) That the Trench Mortar offensive will be limited to 25,000 tons additional.

(5) That the Army do not want the semi-mobile mountings and that about 30 firing points on railway mountings will be sufficient to wear out all the guns we are likely to get from the Navy.

(6) That the manufacture of Tanks of various designs must be pushed to the extreme limit.

(7) That an additional programme of aeroplanes will be necessary.

(8) That the process of substitution and dilution must be continued to release at least 100,000 A 1 men.

(9) That the manufacture of guns should be carried on at full blast during the whole of 1918.

(10) That the shell plant which will have been somewhat damped down in 1918 should be opened out to the full in 1919.

(11) That our Munitions Programme should be harmonized with those of France, Italy, and the United States, so as to secure the maximum production.

(12) That we cannot count on more than a minimum of 11,000,000 tons delivered here during the 12 months, and must not promise to other Departments anything based on a larger delivery. Probably we shall get more, in which case it will be easy to do better than our word.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*December 31, 1917.*

I must draw the attention of the Cabinet to the serious character of the problems of steel supply now presented for their decision.

The revised Munitions Budget which has been circulated involves a heavy reduction upon the Ammunition Programme on which the Commander-in-Chief and the War Office have been counting, not less than 500,000 tons which we could have made into shells having been deducted from it. I had urged as a measure of precaution that we should be permitted to place orders in the United States for 1,000,000 tons of steel, of which 500,000 is needed this year for the reduced programme, and the other 500,000 would afford a reserve on which we could draw sooner or later according to tonnage conditions. We are now told that we cannot place these orders. If this decision is to stand, the Shell Programme of the armies must undergo further



serious reduction. We are cut off from Spanish ore by [want of] tonnage and from American steel by [want of] dollars. In both cases food imports for ourselves or for our Allies are displacing ton for ton metal which could otherwise be fired at the enemy—for which, that is to say, shell factories, the fuses, the filling plants, the guns and the gunners are all available.

At the same time we have been forced to break up Canadian shell plants as soon as they have been laboriously called into being and had begun deliveries, on account of the failure of the Canadian Government or of the Treasury or of both to make the necessary financial arrangements. On top of this we are now confronted with the proposal to cut our Canadian allocation of dollars from 30,000,000 to 20,000,000 per month. . . .

Thirdly, the Admiralty demand for steel in all its forms is already enormous and continues to increase.

In these circumstances it is surely our duty to make vigorous and genuine efforts to sustain the artillery of the British Army with the necessary supplies of ammunition, and not to acquiesce in its being cut down whenever a difficulty of tonnage or dollars or food supply is involved.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*November 11, 1917.*

We ought to endeavour to gain and keep the control of the war to which our strength entitles us, using that strength to sustain our Allies without allowing them to lose their self-reliance. We should be careful not to dissipate our strength or melt it down to the average level of exhausted nations. It will be better used with design by us than weakly dispersed. *Resolute to expend everything for the common cause, we ought not to shrink from being taskmasters.* I deprecate most strongly our making any general agreement in regard to Munitions and raw materials similar to that which has been made about food. On the contrary, I would continue to make *ad hoc* allocations when particular emergencies are shown, always exacting where possible some other services or accommodation in return. There must at any rate be one strong power to face Germany in 1918. To strike an average in these matters, to bind oneself in advance to some system of 'share and share alike,' and thus to deprive ourselves of all our power of giving when need arises, may be logic—it may even be equity—but it is not the way to win the war.

In the end all finished happily. The Shipping Controller proved better than his word. The U-boat pressure weakened and several million tons more freight became in fact available than his caution

had allowed. We too were found to have somewhat larger resources than we had thought it right to parade. As will be seen as the account proceeds, the Ministry of Munitions were found capable not only of fulfilling their original programmes, but of meeting a gigantic emergency for which no formal provision had been made. 'As regards material,' wrote Sir Douglas Haig in his final despatch in 1919, 'it was not until midsummer, 1916, that the artillery situation became even approximately adequate to the conduct of major operations. Throughout the Somme battle the expenditure of artillery ammunition had to be watched with the greatest care. During the battles of 1917 ammunition was plentiful, but the gun situation was a source of constant anxiety. Only in 1918 was it possible to conduct artillery operations independently of any limiting consideration other than that of transport.'

<sup>1</sup> See pages 1190-7.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE AUTUMN STRUGGLE

The Eve of the Passchendaele Offensive—A Misleading Statement—The Prime Minister and the Offensive—My Letter to the Prime Minister—Allenby in Palestine—Brilliant and Frugal Operations—Unsound Strategy—The Battle of Passchendaele—Sir William Robertson and his Responsibilities—The Italian Disaster of Caporetto—Italian Fortitude—The Re-equipment of the Italian Army—The Tank Battle opposite Cambrai—First Ideas of the Use of Tanks—Their Long Misuse—Their First Chance—Ludendorff's Professional Blindness—The German Counter-stroke after Cambrai.

AT the time I rejoined the Government the British armies were on the eve of a new tremendous offensive. The long prepared attack upon the Messines ridge had been executed with precision and success on June 7, and Sir Douglas Haig's further plan was to strike from the direction of Ypres towards Ostend. This was in fact a revival on a gigantic scale and by different methods of those ideas of clearing the sea flank by which Sir John French had been so much attracted in 1914. Forty divisions had been assembled between Kemmel Hill and the Belgian front. Mountains of ammunition had been accumulated, and the strongest concentration of artillery ever yet developed was to sustain the attack. The British Headquarters were as usual confident of a decisive success, and as usual they were stoutly supported by Sir William Robertson and the General Staff at the War Office. On the other hand, the positions to be assaulted were immensely strong. The enemy was fully prepared. The frowning undulations of the Passchendaele-Klercken ridge had been fortified with every resource of German science and ingenuity. The ground was studded with ferro-concrete block-houses, 'Pill Boxes' as they were soon called, crammed with machine guns, lapped in barbed wire, and impenetrable to the heaviest bombardment. The railway communications behind the enemy's front were at least as good as, if not indeed superior to those which maintained the British offensive. A German army containing three times as many divisions as were required at any given moment to hold the ground had been assembled under Prince Rupprecht, and every facility for the relief and replacement of exhausted units had been carefully studied. The Dutch railways carried ceaseless

supplies of gravel for the concrete, and the elaboration of the defences line behind line proceeded continually.

Apart from the hopes of decisive victory, which grew with every step away from the British front line and reached absolute conviction in the Intelligence Department, two reasons were adduced by General Headquarters to justify the renewed severe demand upon the troops. First, the alleged exhausted and quiescent condition of the French Army since the defeat of General Nivelle's April offensive; secondly, the importance of taking Ostend and Zeebrugge in order to paralyse or cripple the U-boat war. The first of these arguments was exaggerated. The French Army was no doubt saving its strength as much as possible; but the casualty tables show that during 1917 they inflicted nearly as many losses on the Germans as did our own troops. The U-boat argument was wholly fallacious. A grave responsibility rests upon the Admiralty for misleading Haig and his Staff about the value of Ostend and Zeebrugge to the submarine campaign. These two ports were convenient advanced bases for U-boats working in the English Channel, but they were in no way indispensable to the submarine war. Submarines able to go completely around the British Isles and to remain at sea a whole month at a time could work almost as easily from their own home bases in the Elbe, the Weser, and the Ems, as from the advanced and much-battered harbours of Belgium. The whole U-boat war was based on the main German naval harbours, and was never dependent on anything else. In fact in May, 1918, the month after both Ostend and Zeebrugge had been sealed up by the Navy, the U-boat sinkings actually showed an increase over the preceding month in which they were open and in full activity. Whatever influence this erroneous argument may have had upon the Haig-Robertson decision to launch a new offensive, it certainly contributed to baffle the objections of the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet. It seemed to throw the army into the struggle against the submarines. It confused the issue, it darkened counsel, it numbed misgivings, overpowered the dictates of prudence, and cleared the way for a forlorn expenditure of valour and life without equal in futility.

In the war against Turkey in the south-eastern theatre the most costly and laborious policy was also pursued. The Turks, fortified between the desert and the sea at Gaza under Jemal Pasha, confronted successfully the British Army under Allenby, which had toiled forward by railway and water-pipe line from Egypt at extreme exertion and expense. This obstacle was surmounted or destroyed in the following year. Meanwhile however the obvious manœuvre of landing an army behind the

Turks was dismissed by Sir William Robertson as venturesome and impracticable.

Even before I joined his Government the Prime Minister, as I have written, used to discuss the war situation with me freely. On my taking office he made me acquainted with everything. After his excursion with General Nivelle and its disillusionments, he had returned to those views against seeking offensives on the Western Front without the necessary superiority or method, with which the reader is familiar. The peak of the U-boat sinkings seemed to have been surmounted. If on land hopes had been dupes, fears at sea had also been liars. Mr. Lloyd George was now content to await in the main theatre the arrival of the American Armies. He wished Sir Douglas Haig to maintain an active defensive for the rest of the year and to nurse his strength. Meanwhile activity in Palestine and the reinforcement of Italy by British and French Divisions might produce important results against Turkey and Austria, and would in any case not be unduly costly in life. At first the majority of the War Cabinet shared these general opinions. But between right thought and right action there was a gulf. Sir William Robertson, and under his direction the General Staff at the War Office, pressed unceasingly for further immediate exertions. Their insistence gained several adherents in the Cabinet. All through June the discussions were maintained. In the end the Prime Minister did not feel strong enough to face the Haig-Robertson combination. He submitted with resentful fatalism. The plan of sustaining Italy was dropped, and by the third week of July Robertson had extorted from the Cabinet and conveyed to Haig an assurance of 'whole-hearted' support' for the Passchendaele attack. When I had the opportunity of learning the facts it was too late. The decision had already been taken. My only hope was to limit the consequences. On July 22 I gave my counsel as follows:—

*Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister.*

Many thanks for letting me see these most interesting papers which I return herewith. Broadly speaking I agree with Smuts. But I deplore with you the necessity for giving way to the military wish for a renewed offensive in the West. The armies are equal. If anything, the Germans are the stronger. They have larger reserves and ample munitions. An endless series of fortified lines with all kinds of flooding possibilities and great natural difficulties of ground constitute insuperable obstacles. We already approach the end of July. Even if three or four battles as good as Messines are won, the situation

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, Vol. II. p. 249.

in the West will not be appreciably altered by the end of the year.

It is clear however that no human power exists which can stop the attempt being made. The essential thing now is to arrive at a definition of success and 'great results' which will enable a new decision to be taken after the first or second phases of this offensive have been fought. Such a definition must, it seems to me, involve three conditions, viz., objectives taken; casualties sustained; and thirdly (very important) the time taken or required between any one thrust and the next. Thus it should be possible, by reference to these forecasts, to settle definitely after (say) six weeks of fighting whether there really is any prospect of obtaining 'great results' before winter sets in. Unless you can arrive at something definite on these points, your Italian project, with which I cordially agree, will simply be put off from day to day until it is too late. Remember how Joffre behaved about the four divisions which were to go to the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles as soon as he knew whether he was going to achieve decisive results in the Champagne battle in 1915.

It is worth also remembering that the best of all feints, and the most deceptive, is a real attack which you subsequently decide not to carry through; the reserves for which are suddenly thrown into quite a different theatre.

With regard to the East, the truth is staring us in the face. An army of six divisions, British or Franco-British, should be taken from [the] Salonica [front] and put in behind Jemal's army. This will force that army to surrender, and all the allied troops in Syria and Palestine, including Allenby's, would be free by the spring of next year for action in Italy or France. The mere concentration of five or six divisions in Salonica, as they were gradually replaced on the front by fresh [Greek] arrivals, would impart to the Salonica army a speculative value it has wholly lost. It would be crouched instead of sprawled. They could stay in Salonica training and recuperating until the season of a potential Russo-Roumanian offensive had passed, collecting aquatic transport meanwhile. All the time they would be threatening the enemy in a dozen places. It will be a thousand pities if this or something like it cannot be done.

Don't get torpedoed; for if I am left alone your colleagues will eat me.

The Prime Minister went so far as to offer the command of the British armies in Palestine to General Smuts. After deliberation Smuts replied that he was willing to accept the task

on one condition, namely that he should be allowed to land an adequate army to cut the Turkish communications. As this project was not considered open, he declined the command. But in his place was found a leader whose personality and skill were equal to the task of dislodging and ultimately of destroying the Turkish armies in Syria without the aid of a great amphibious operation. With the appointment of Allenby the whole situation in Palestine was rapidly transformed. Although he repeatedly demanded more reinforcements than could be spared, and prudently dwelt on the difficulties before him, Allenby by a series of masterly combinations succeeded with smaller forces both in out-manceuvring and in out-fighting the Turks under Jemal, advised by Falkenhayn. Feinting at Gaza in the last week of October, he stormed Beersheba by a surprise attack of two infantry divisions and a wide turning movement of cavalry and camelry. Having thus gained the enemy's desert flank, he rolled up from the eastward in a succession of fierce actions the strongly fortified Turkish lines. Gaza was taken on November 6: 10,000 Turks had been made prisoners, and at least as many killed and wounded: and a vigorous pursuit opened the port of Jaffa to the further supply of the British forces. Thus possessed of the coastal region, a new base, and an alternative short line of communication, Allenby advanced north-westward upon Jerusalem, continuing to drive the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies before him and compromising the eventual retreat of the Fourth. On December 8, 1917, the Turks abandoned Jerusalem after 400 years of blighting occupation, and the British Commander-in-Chief entered the city amid the acclamations of the inhabitants. Here he maintained himself in a situation of much delicacy throughout the winter, re-grouping his forces, wisely fostering the Arab revolt which grew around the astonishing personality of Lawrence, and preparing for even larger enterprises in the spring. With no more than 150,000 men he had expelled 170,000 German-led Turkish troops from fortified positions—Plevnas—on which years of labour had been spent, and had inflicted upon them most serious losses in men, guns and territory.

No praise is too high for these brilliant and frugal operations, which will long serve as a model in theatres of war in which manœuvre is possible. Nevertheless their results did not simplify the general problem. On the contrary, by opening up a competing interest which could not influence the main decision, they even complicated it. The very serious drain of men, munitions and transport which flowed unceasingly to the Palestine Expedition ought to have been arrested by action far swifter in character and far larger in scale. Brevity and finality,

not less at this period than throughout the war, were the true tests of any diversion against Turkey. Prolonged and expanding operations in distant unrelated theatres, whether they languished as at Salonica, or crackled briskly and brightly forward under Allenby in Palestine, were not to be reconciled with a wise war policy. It would have been far safer and far cheaper in life and resources to run a greater risk for a shorter time. The advantage of the command of the sea should not have been neglected. If, while Allenby held the Turks at Gaza, a long-prepared descent had been made at Haifa or elsewhere on the sea coast behind them, and if the railway by which alone they could exist had been severed in September by a new army of six or eight divisions, the war in Syria would have been ended at a stroke. The Eastern drain on our resources would have been stopped from February onwards; all the British troops in Palestine would have been available to meet the supreme peril in France. But in Palestine as formerly at Gallipoli, the clash of the Western and Eastern schools of thought produced incoherence and half-measures. Enough was sent East to be a dangerous dispersion, and never at one time enough to compel a prompt conclusion. It will be incredible to future generations that the strategists of an island people then blessed with the unique and sovereign attribute of Sea Power should, throughout the whole of the Great War, have failed so utterly to turn it to offensive profit.

In the actual event, as will be seen, Ludendorff's offensive of 1918 dissipated in a day all Allenby's careful plans for the spring campaign. Not less than sixty battalions with many batteries were incontinently snatched from Palestine to plug the shot hole of the twenty-first of March; and his depleted army remained till two Indian divisions arrived from Mesopotamia in August, in an extremely precarious position. That from such circumstances he should have contrived the captures of Deraa, Damascus and Aleppo, and the destruction of every vestige of Turkish power in Syria, military and civil before the armistice, is one of the most remarkable achievements of the war.

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Meanwhile the British offensive against Passchendaele unrolled its sombre fate. The terrific artillery pulverized the ground, smashing simultaneously the German trenches and the ordinary drainage. By sublime devotion and frightful losses small indentations were made upon the German front. In six weeks at the farthest point we had advanced four miles. Soon the rain descended, and the vast crater fields became a sea of choking fetid mud in which men, animals and tanks floundered and perished hopelessly. The few tracks which alone could be pre-



served across this morass were swept with ceaseless shell fire, through which endless columns of transport marched with fortitude all night long. The impossibility of supplying the British field and medium batteries with ammunition at any distance from the only road maintained in being, led to their being massed in line by its side. Thus there could be no concealment, and the German counter-fire caused very heavy losses in gunners and guns and killed nearly all the artillery horses.

The disappointing captures of ground were relieved by tales of prodigious German slaughter. The losses and anxieties inflicted upon the enemy must not be underrated. Ludendorff's admissions are upon record. These violent sustained thrusts shook the enemy to their foundations. But the German losses were always on a far smaller scale. They always had far fewer troops in the cauldron. They always took nearly two lives for one and sold every inch of ground with extortion.

Further efforts were made during October by the Prime Minister to bring the operations to an end. He went so far as to call Sir Henry Wilson and Lord French into counsel as 'technical advisers' of the Cabinet, independent of the General Staff. We have the tale naïvely published by Robertson himself.<sup>1</sup> Lord French, we are told, after criticizing 'in twenty pages out of twenty-six' the Haig-Robertson strategy and tactics, recommended that we should 'stand everywhere on the defensive, only resorting to such offensive action as would make the defensive effective; await the development of the forces of the United States; and in the meantime rely upon a drastic economic war to weaken the enemy.' In formally consulting outside advisers the Prime Minister obviously courted the resignation of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. It was not forthcoming. The Cabinet were not prepared to demand it; and nothing but mutual mistrust resulted.

Accordingly in Flanders the struggle went on. New divisions continued to replace those that were shattered. The rain descended and the mud sea spread. Still the will power of the Commander and the discipline of the Army remained invincible. By measureless sacrifices Passchendaele was won. But beyond, far beyond, still rose intact and unapproachable the fortifications of Klercken. August had passed away; September was gone; October was far spent. The full severity of a Flanders winter gripped the ghastly battlefield. Ceaselessly the Menin gate of Ypres disgorged its streams of manhood. Fast as the cannons fired, the ammunition behind them flowed in faster. Even in October the British Staff were planning and launching offensives and were confident of reaching the goal of decisive results

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, Vol. II, pp. 256 et seq.

It was not until the end of November that final failure was accepted. '*Boche* is bad and *Boue* is bad,' said Foch, then little more than an observer of events, 'but *Boche* and *Boue* together . . . Ah!' He held up warning hands.

It cannot be said that 'the soldiers,' that is to say the Staff, did not have their way. They tried their sombre experiment to its conclusion. They took all they required from Britain. They wore down alike the manhood and the guns of the British Army almost to destruction. They did it in the face of the plainest warnings, and of arguments which they could not answer. Sir Douglas Haig acted from conviction; but Sir William Robertson drifted ponderously. He has accepted the main responsibility. He could not well avoid it. 'I was more than a mere adviser. I was the professional head of all the British Armies, as Haig was of those in France. They looked to me, as did the whole Empire, to see that they were not asked to do impossible things, and were not in any way placed at a disadvantage unnecessarily.<sup>1</sup> And again (June 23), 'My own responsibility . . . is not small in urging the continuance of a plan regarding which he [the Prime Minister] has grave misgivings . . .'<sup>2</sup> And lastly (Robertson to Haig, Sept. 27), 'My own views are known to you. They have always been "defensive" in all theatres but the West. But the difficulty is to *prove* the wisdom of this now that Russia is out. I confess I stick to it more because I see nothing better, and because my instinct prompts me to stick to it, than because of any good argument by which I can support it.' These are terrible words when used to sustain the sacrifices of nearly four hundred thousand men. Meanwhile the results of neglecting Italy for the sake of Passchendaele exploded with a violence which no one could have foreseen. On October 24 began the Italian disaster of Caporetto. Six German divisions were brought swiftly to the Isonzo by night marches and concealed in deep valleys behind the front. These and the presence of General von Below animated the large Austrian armies. A skilful attack by mountain roads gained a key position. A sudden bombardment by heavy artillery and gas shells, followed by a general assault along the whole front led at the decisive points by German troops, aided by the effects of defeatist propaganda within the Italian lines, produced in twelve hours a complete and decisive defeat of General Cadorna's army. By nightfall more than a million Italians were in full retreat. A large portion of the army passed into dissolution. In three days 200,000 men and 1,800 guns were captured, and before the long retreat was finished and the Italian front had been reconstituted

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, Vol. I, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 255.

80 miles to the westward along the Piave, upwards of 800,000 soldiers through death, wounds, sickness, capture, desertion, and above all disappearance, had been torn from the Italian standards. This astounding disaster required immediate exertions by Britain and France.

I was resting at my house in Kent when authentic news arrived. The Prime Minister telephoned to me to motor at once to Walton Heath. He showed me the telegrams, which even in their guarded form revealed a defeat of the first magnitude. At this moment when our army had been bled white at Passchendaele and when the French were still recovering from the Nivelles offensive and its disquieting consequences, the prospect of having to make a large detachment of force for Italy was uninviting. The Prime Minister reacted with his accustomed resiliency. He set off in a few days to Rapallo, where he had proposed a meeting with the French and Italian political and military chiefs. Meanwhile five French and five British divisions under General Fayolle and Sir Herbert Plumer, two of the most successful and experienced Commanders on the Western Front, were moved with the utmost rapidity through the tunnels under the Alps, and began to appear from the 10th of November onwards upon the Italian front. Had they been sent a few months earlier, it is certain, even if the Ally-Italian offensive had not yielded important results, that events would have followed an entirely different course.

The greatness of the Italian nation shone forth in an hour which recalled the morrow of Cannae. 'Defeatism' withered in the flame of national resolve. Immense as had been the Italian losses, the war effort of Italy was far greater from Caporetto onwards than in the earlier period of the war. Ruthless punishment restored the discipline of the armies: ardent reserves and volunteers refilled their ranks. But all this took time, and for several months the fate of Italy hung in the balance. It was necessary to contemplate a situation in which the North of Italy might be completely overrun by Teutonic armies; when Italy might be beaten out of the war, and when the development of a Swiss front might have been imposed upon France. Mercifully 'the trees do not grow up to the sky,' and offensives however successful lose their pristine force satiated with the ground they gain.

What would have happened had Germany prepared from the beginning to back her initial impulse with twelve or fourteen more divisions drawn from the vanished Russian front, is an inquiry which may well occupy and instruct the military student. But Ludendorff was nursing other plans, larger, more ambitious and as it turned out fatal to his country. Already the vast design of the German offensive in 1918 had gripped his mind. Italy

was but a 'side show,' worth perhaps 'the bones of a Pomeranian Grenadier,' but never to obstruct a classical theory and the supreme trial of strength against the strongest foe. Yet the falling away of Italy, a people of 40 millions, a first-class power, from the cause of the Allies at this time would have been an event more pregnant with consequences than all the triumphs of March 21, 1918. To overwhelm Italy and to sue for a general peace afforded still the surest hope for the Central Empires. It is a valid though inadequate claim on the part of the British High Command that the continuous pressure on Passchendaele played its part in influencing the German war mind. The almost inexhaustible resources of the British attack, its conquering of superhuman difficulties, its obstinate Commanders, its undaunted troops, the repeated destruction of the German front lines, the drain—half ours, but still frightful—on German resources, all riveted the eyes of Ludendorff on the Western Front. God forbid that such sacrifices, however needless, however disproportioned, should be vain!

From these deep matters I must recall the reader to the limited situation from which my tale is told.

It was imperative that Italy should be rearmed to the utmost possible extent by France and England. On November 18 I proceeded to Paris to meet in conclave with Loucheur and the Italian Minister of Armaments, General Dallolio. It was a cheerless experience; our margins were so small, our needs so exacting—and the Italian void gaped. In those hard days defeat was not leniently viewed by overstrained Allies. We all went through it in our turn—the politeness which veiled depreciation, the sympathy which scarcely surmounted resentment. And here I must pay my tribute to the dignity and quiet courage of the Italian Minister, and to the respect which in such circumstances he knew how to command from all.

*Mr. Churchill to Prime Minister and Lord Derby.*

*November 21, 1917.*

General Furse and I have after consultation to-day met first Loucheur and secondly Loucheur and Dallolio. We have arranged as follows: (1) The French will send at once 150,000 rifles, complete transportation of which will begin to-night and take about eight days. We shall give an equal number beginning on the ninth day with possibility of some delay in the latter portion. (2) The French will give 2,000 mitrailleuses and we 2,000 hotchkiss guns spread over next few weeks. (3) Ammunition as requested for all the above from both French and British sources. (4) French will give immediately 300 field guns ('seventy-fives') with ammuni-

tion. We reserved our undertaking on this item on account of the difficulty, though Italians requested 300 field guns from us. The 15-pounders may afford a partial solution. (5) French will give from 175 to 200 medium guns and howitzers with ammunition. We have promised to do our best to provide up to 175 of various medium natures, but we have warned the Italians that possibly the whole number cannot be found. It is understood that these deliveries will be spread over two months. (6) French cannot give any heavy or very heavy pieces, but we have undertaken to give 40 heavy—probably 8-inch howitzers with ammunition—which is Italian total demand. (7) We have refused very heavy natures. (8) We have stated that we consider 40 tanks if sent at all should be complete with British personnel and as part of British force and that this is a matter for General Staff. Above appears to be upon the whole satisfactory arrangement to meet the emergency. In making it we have kept in view possibility that it may be better to supply the deficiency in field guns and medium natures by increasing the proportion of organized artillery batteries with British force rather than by sending unfamiliar equipments to the Italian army which we need ourselves. General Furse leaves for London to-night. I return the day after.

Secondly, Loucheur will endeavour to secure a rebate of 250,000 tons out of 2,000,000 allocated to France and Italy for food in aid of my promised deliveries of steel to him. If he fails I am free to review the position within these limits.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Passchendaele offensive had ended in mire and carnage, when suddenly there emerged from the British sector opposite Cambrai a battle totally different in character from any yet fought in the war. For the first time the mechanical method of securing Surprise was effectively used. Boraston's account points to this battle as a refutation of 'the crude talk about the backward method of our leadership in France during 1916-17; its lack of genius or skill; its prodigious waste of life.'<sup>1</sup> Here in his opinion was a superb example of scientific novelty and audacious tactics combined into a conception of military genius. But this conception, not only its underlying idea but its methods and even its instruments, had been pressed upon the British High Command for almost exactly two years. The plan of attack at Cambrai was inherent in the original conception of the Tank. It was for this, and for this precisely, that Tanks had been devised. In my first memorandum on armoured Caterpillar

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, Vol. I, Ch. XV, p. 283.

vehicles, written for Sir John French on December 3, 1915, the following passages occurred:—

'The cutting of the enemy's wire and the general domination of his firing-line can be effected by engines of this character. About seventy are now nearing completion in England, and should be inspected. None should be used until all can be used at once. They should be disposed secretly along the whole attacking front two or three hundred yards apart. Ten or fifteen minutes before the assault these engines should move forward over the best line of advance open, passing through or across our trenches at prepared points. They are capable of traversing any ordinary obstacle, ditch, breastwork, or trench. They carry two or three Maxims each, and can be fitted with flame apparatus. Nothing but a direct hit from a field gun will stop them. On reaching the enemy's wire they turn to the left or right and run down parallel to the enemy's trench, sweeping his parapet with their fire, and crushing and cutting the barbed wire in lanes and in a slightly serpentine course. . . .

'If artillery is used to cut wire, the direction and imminence of the attack is proclaimed days beforehand. But by this method the assault follows the wire-cutting almost immediately, i.e. before any reinforcements can be brought up by the enemy, or any special defensive measure taken.

'The Caterpillars are capable of actually crossing the enemy's trench and advancing to cut his communication trenches; but into this aspect it is not necessary to go now. One step at a time. It will be easy, when the enemy's front line is in our hands, to find the best places for the Caterpillars to cross by for any further advance which may be required. They can climb any slope. They are, in short, movable machine-gun cupolas as well as wire-smashers. . . .

'Surprise consists in novelty and suddenness. Secrecy is vital, and it would be possible, over a period of three or four weeks, to work routine conditions into such a state that very little extraordinary preparation would be required. The weak man-power available in the enemy's front line can easily be overwhelmed by forces which might appear to be assembled in the ordinary course.'

These words in a paper printed by the Committee of Imperial Defence had been read by Sir Douglas Haig before the end of 1915.<sup>1</sup> Tanks in considerable and growing numbers had been in action on the British front since their conception had been improvidently exposed to the enemy on the Somme in 1916. At

<sup>1</sup> See also my reference to Tank tactics in the Memorandum of Oct. 21, 1917, of which a print had been sent to G.H.Q.

the Headquarters of the Tank Corps the original tactical ideas inspiring their conception had been earnestly and thoroughly developed. The Tank Corps had never yet been allowed to put them into practice. These engines had been used in small numbers as mere ancillaries to infantry and artillery battles. They had been condemned to wallow in the crater fields under the full blast of massed German artillery, or to founder in the mud of Passchendaele. Never had they been allowed to have their own chance in a battle made for them, adapted to their special capacities, and in which they could render the inestimable service for which they had been specially designed.

The success of a few Tanks in a minor operation at Passchendaele, where in the Army Corps of General Maxse they were correctly employed, was probably the means of rescuing the Tank Corps from the increasing disfavour into which their engines had fallen through being so long mishandled by the British Headquarters. Whatever may have been the reason, the fact remains that 'a project which had been constantly in the mind of the General Staff of the Tank Corps for nearly three months and in anticipation of which preparations had already been undertaken, was approved, and its date fixed for November 20.'<sup>1</sup> All the requisite conditions were at last accorded. The Tanks were to operate on ground not yet ploughed up by artillery against a front not yet prepared to meet an offensive. Above all Surprise! The Tanks were themselves to open the attack. With a daring acceptance of responsibility Sir Julian Byng, who commanded the Army, ordered that not a shot was to be fired by the British artillery, not even for registration, until the Tanks were actually launched. The Artillery schemes which for the first time rendered this feat practicable without mishap to the troops reflect the highest credit on their authors.

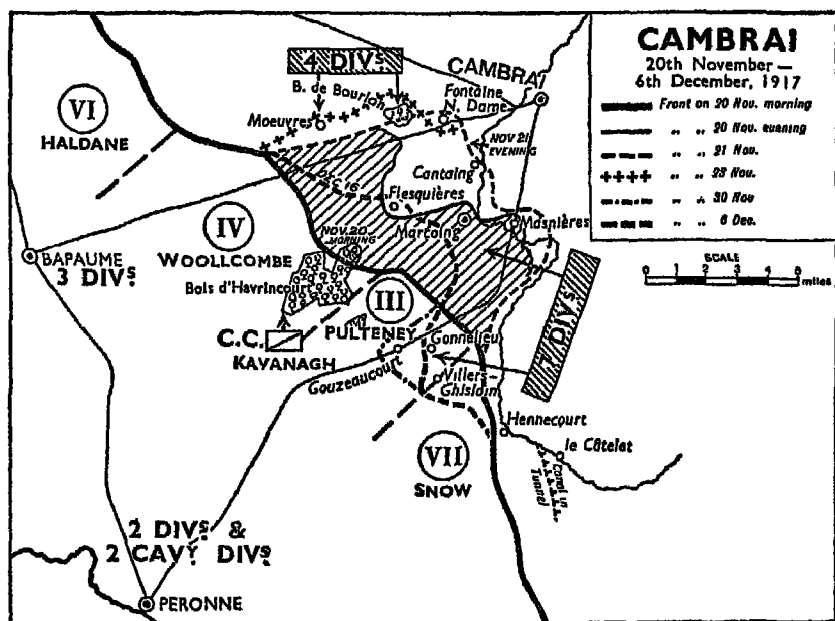
The minutely prepared scheme of the Tank Corps had the following aim:—'To effect the penetration of four systems of trenches in a few hours without any type of artillery preparation.'<sup>2</sup> Nearly 500 Tanks were available. 'To-morrow,' wrote General Elles, Commander of the Tank Corps, in his Special Order to his men, 'the Tank Corps will have the chance for which it has been waiting for many months—to operate on good going in the van of the battle.'

'The attack,' says the historian of the Tank Corps (Colonel Fuller), 'was a stupendous success. As the Tanks moved forward with the infantry following close behind, the enemy completely lost his balance, and those who did not fly panic-stricken from the field surrendered with little or no resistance. . . . By

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Fuller, *Tanks in the Great War*, Chapter XIX, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

4 p.m. on November 20 one of the most astonishing battles in all history had been won and, as far as the Tank Corps was concerned, tactically finished, for no reserves existing it was not possible to do more." In the brief life of a November day the whole German trench system had been penetrated on a front of 6 miles, and 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns captured, without the loss of more than 1,500 British soldiers. 'It is a question,' declares the Staff Officer, "whether any stroke of the allied army on the Western Front was more fruitful ultimately of ground and result than this battle of Cambrai, despite its limited design."



But if this was so, why not have done it before? Why not have done it on a far larger scale? If British and French war leaders had possessed—not more genius, for the possibilities had by this time been obvious to all who were studying the Tank problem—but the vision and comprehension which is expected from the honoured chiefs of great armies, there was no reason why a battle like Cambrai could not have been fought a year before, or better still, why three or four concerted battles like Cambrai could not have been fought simultaneously in the spring of 1917. Then indeed the enemy's front line pierced at once in three or four places might have been completely overwhelmed on a front of 50

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Fuller, *Tanks in the Great War*, Chapter XIX, pp. 148, 150.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Douglas Haig's *Command*, p. 392.



miles. Then indeed the roll forward of the whole army might have been achieved and the hideous deadlock broken.

But, it will be said, such assertions take insufficient account of the practical difficulties, of the slowly gathered experience, of the immense refinements of study, discipline and organization required. Could, for instance, 3,000 Tanks have been manufactured by the spring of 1917? Could the men to handle them have been spared from the front? Could their tactical training have been perfected behind the line and out of contact with the enemy? Could the secret have been kept? Would not preparation on so large a scale, even behind the line, have become apparent to the enemy? To all these questions we will answer that one-tenth of the mental effort expended by the Headquarters Staff on preparing the old-fashioned offensives of which the war had consisted, one-twentieth of the influence they used to compel reluctant Governments to sanction these offensives, one-hundredth of the men lost in them, would have solved all the problems easily and overwhelmingly before the spring of 1917. As for the Germans getting to hear of it, learning, for instance, that the British were practising with Caterpillar armoured cars at dummy trenches behind their lines on a large scale—what use would they have made of their knowledge? What use did Ludendorff make of the awful disclosure, not as a mere rumour or questionable Intelligence report, but of the actual apparition of the Tanks in September, 1916? There is a melancholy comfort in reflecting that if the British and French commands were short-sighted, the ablest soldier in Germany was blind. In truth, these high military experts all belong to the same school. Haig at least moved faster and farther along the new path, and in consequence, doubtfully and tardily, he reaped in the end a generous reward.

It has been necessary to the whole argument of this Part to dwell insistently upon these aspects of the Battle of Cambrai. Accusing as I do without exception all the great ally offensives of 1915, 1916, and 1917, as needless and wrongly conceived operations of infinite cost, I am bound to reply to the question, What else could be done? And I answer it, pointing to the Battle of Cambrai, '*This could have been done.*' This in many variants, this in larger and better forms ought to have been done, and would have been done if only the Generals had not been content to fight machine-gun bullets with the breasts of gallant men, and think that that was waging war.

It remains only to be said of the battle of Cambrai that the initial success so far exceeded the expectations of the Third Army Staff that no suitable preparations had been made to exploit it. The Cavalry who scampered forward were naturally soon held up by snipers and machine guns, and no important advance beyond

the first day's gains was achieved. The railways at this part of the German front favoured a rapid hostile concentration, and ten days after the victory the Germans delivered a most powerful counter-stroke in which they recaptured a large portion of the conquered ground and took in their turn 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns. In this counter-attack the enemy used for the first time those tactics of 'infiltration' by small highly competent parties of machine-gunners or trench-mortar men, which they were soon to employ on a larger scale. The bells which had been rung for Cambrai were therefore judged premature, and the year 1917 closed on the allied fronts, British, French, Italian, Russian and Balkan, in a gloom relieved only by Allenby's sword-flash at Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER XV

### BRITAIN CONQUERS THE U-BOATS

*'Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.'*

DR. JOHNSON.

'Nearly succeeded'—The Fatal Puzzle—The Anatomy of the Submarine—Surface or Submerged Attack—Arming of the Mercantile Marine—The Q-ships—The Episode of the *Dunraven*—The German Dilemma—Depth Charges and Destroyers—Detector Nets—The Prelude to Unrestricted Warfare—The Crisis of the Struggle—Admiralty Counter-measures—The Question of Convoy: pros and cons—My March Memorandum—Wireless Control of Shipping—Importance of Concentration both of Shipping and Protection—Carson's Anxious Tenure—Triumph of the Convoy System—The Dover Barrage—Admiral Keyes in Command—The Giant Anglo-American Barrage—The Hunters hunted—Total Defeat of the U-boat—The Price.

IT is commonly said that the German drive on Paris in 1914 and the unlimited U-boat warfare both 'nearly succeeded.' But this expression requires analysis, and also differentiation between the issues on land and sea. A partisan watching an evenly contested football match, an engineer watching a vehicle whose weight he does not know exactly, crossing a bridge whose strength he has never been able to measure, experiences no doubt similar sensations of anxiety or excitement. The processes however are different. A football match like a great battle on land is in a continual state of flux and chance. But whether the vehicle will break down the bridge does not depend on chance. It depends on the weight of the vehicle and the strength of the bridge. When both these are unknown beforehand, anxiety is natural. But once it is known that the bridge will bear at least ten tons and the vehicle at the most weighs no more than eight, all misgivings are proved to have been unfounded. To say that the vehicle 'nearly' broke down the bridge is untrue. There was never any chance of it. Whereas any one of a score of alternative accidents would have given the German Army Paris in 1914, the seafaring resources of Great Britain were in fact and in the circumstances always superior to the U-boat attack. Moreover, that attack was inherently of a character so gradual that these superior resources could certainly obtain their full development.

Nevertheless, the struggle between the British sailormen, Royal and Mercantile—for both played an equally indispensable part—and the German U-boats stands among the most heart-shaking episodes of history, and its declared result will for generations be regarded as a turning point in the destiny of nations. It was in scale and in stake the greatest conflict ever decided at sea. It was almost entirely a duel between Britain and Germany. Austrian submarines assisted the Germans. Allied navies, United States and Japanese destroyers, helped Great Britain to the best of their power. But three-quarters of the tonnage sunk was British, and 175 U-boats out of a total German war loss of 182 were destroyed by British agency.

The shortcomings in the higher command of the British Navy, afloat and at home, which had led to Admiral de Robeck's failure to force the Dardanelles, to the abortive conclusion of Jutland, and to the neglect to carry the fighting into the German Bight, had given to the enemy during 1915 and 1916 the means of developing an entirely novel form of sea attack upon a scale the potential intensity of which no one could measure beforehand, and which if successful would be fatal. At first sight all seemed to favour the challengers. Two hundred U-boats each possessing between three and four weeks' radius of action, each capable of sinking with torpedo, gun fire or bomb four or five vessels in a single day, beset the approaches to an island along which there passed in and out every week several thousand merchant vessels. The submarine, with only a periscope showing momentarily like a broomstick above the waves, could discharge its torpedo unseen. It could rise to the surface and fire its gun to sink, burn or induce the surrender of a defenceless vessel, and disappear into the invisible depths of the vast waste of water without leaving a trace behind. Of all the tasks ever set to a Navy none could have appeared more baffling than that of sheltering this enormous traffic and groping deep below the surface of the sea for the deadly elusive foe. It was in fact a game of blind man's buff in an unlimited space of three dimensions.

Had the problem been surveyed in cold blood beforehand it might well have seemed insoluble. But in the event as the danger grew, so grew also the will power of the threatened State, and the courage, endurance and ingenuity of its servants. At the summit through the authority of the Prime Minister all misgivings were suppressed, all croakers silenced, and all doubters banished from executive responsibility. But strict inquiry was made into facts, and no official grimace passed long for argument. The qualities of audacity, initiative and seamanship inbred in the sailors and younger officers of the Navy found in this new warfare their highest opportunity. But without the unquenchable spirit of the

Merchant Service nothing would have availed. The foundation of all defence lay in the fact that Merchant-seamen three or four times 'submarined' returned unflinching to the perilous seas, and even in the awful month when one ship out of every four that left the United Kingdom never came home, no voyage was delayed for lack of resolute civilian volunteers.

To realize the issues of this strange form of warfare hitherto unknown to human experience, the reader must understand the general anatomy of the submarine. This delicate vessel is driven when on the surface by powerful oil engines which in those days yielded speeds up to sixteen or seventeen knots. Submerged she depended upon electric accumulators which she could recharge by her oil engines when on the surface. These accumulators produced a maximum speed under water of about eight knots, and would last about one hour at full and twenty at economical speed. In order to dive, a submarine does not give herself negative buoyancy, i.e. make herself heavier than the water. She fills enough tanks to have about a ton of buoyancy in hand and then, by depressing her horizontal rudders and going ahead on her electric motors, swims down to the desired depth. A submarine is strong enough to resist the ever-increasing water pressures down to about two hundred and fifty feet below the surface. Beyond that depth there is increasing risk of leakage through the joints of her hull. Any serious penetration by salt water may liberate chlorine gas from the electric accumulators and choke the crew in tortures. Beyond a depth of three or four hundred feet a submarine would certainly be destroyed by the water pressure and would swiftly sink bilged to the ocean floor. In deep water therefore a submarine could only remain submerged while in motion, and could only keep in motion as long as her accumulators lasted. When these were exhausted, she must come to the surface and float defenceless during several hours while they were being recharged. On the other hand, where the sea was not more than two hundred and fifty feet deep, a submarine need not fear to give herself negative buoyancy. She could sink and sit on the bottom without using up her accumulators as long as the air and oxygen tubes she carried enabled the crew to breathe. This allowed her to remain below water for at least forty-eight hours, during which time she could also move perhaps sixty miles. The power to remain submerged for more than twenty hours was thus limited to the shallow seas. On the other hand, depths of less than fifty feet raised difficulties of another kind which prevented submerged attacks.

The prime weapon of all submarines was the torpedo; and as long as they fought warships, no other weapon was of any service. Thin-skinned submersible vessels could only engage in an artillery

duel with armoured surface ships at a fatal disparity in risk. The penetration of a U-boat's hull by a single shot deprived her of the power of diving, even if it did not sink her outright. But when the Germans decided to use their U-boats to attack merchant ships, another set of arguments arose. The merchant ships were so numerous that the torpedo was an unsuitable weapon for procuring decisive results. It was expensive, difficult and lengthy to manufacture; the supply could only gradually be broadened out; and only from eight to twenty torpedoes could be carried in submarines according to their classes. As a large proportion of torpedoes missed their target for one fault or another, the destructive power of a U-boat against commerce during a single cruise was severely limited. Therefore the first move of the Germans was to arm their U-boats with guns to attack merchant ships on the surface of the water, sinking them either by gun fire or, after surrender, by bombs placed on board.

This method also enabled the U-boats to use their much superior surface speed, and allowed them to discriminate between different classes of merchant ships and between enemy and neutral ships; to observe their own Prize Law by visit and search; and finally to give time for the merchant crews, if they chose to surrender their vessel, to escape in open boats.

The first British counter-move, made on my responsibility in 1915, was to arm British merchantmen to the greatest possible extent with guns of sufficient power to deter the U-boat from surface attack. When this was achieved, the reduction of the assailant's speed and the limited torpedo supply increased the merchant ship's chance of escape proportionately. The argument was overwhelming. Unhappily there were at first hardly any guns either for merchant ships or for the coastal patrols. We searched every quarter of the globe and all the recesses of the Admiralty for guns, no matter how obsolete or various in pattern. A hundred coastal vessels by the spring of 1915 were provided with one 12-pounder gun apiece. The more important seagoing vessels were also armed. The scarcity was such that their guns had to be transferred from outward- to inward-bound vessels at ports outside the submarine zone, so as to make them go further. Despite every effort made by my successor, Mr. Balfour, the supply of guns expanded slowly; and it was not until the autumn of 1916 that he was in a position to undertake the arming of the whole of the Mercantile Marine. Good progress had however been made before the submarine danger renewed itself in its gravest form.

As the U-boats were forced by the progressive arming of the British Mercantile Marine to rely increasingly on under-water attacks, they encountered a new set of dangers. The submerged U-boat with its defective vision ran the greatest risk of mistaking

neutral for British vessels and of drowning neutral crews, and thus of embroiling Germany with other great Powers. We also resorted to the well-known *ruse de guerre* of hoisting false colours in order further to baffle and confuse the enemy. Thus from a very early stage the U-boats were forced to choose between all the practical inconveniences and far-reaching diplomatic consequences of under-water attack with the torpedo, or on the other hand of facing the disproportionate hazards of the gun duel on the surface. It was at this stage that we developed the stratagem of the Q-ship. A number of merchant vessels were specially equipped with torpedo tubes and with concealed guns firing from behind trap-door bulwarks, and sent along the trade routes to offer themselves to the hostile submarines. When the U-boat, wishing to economize torpedoes, attacked the Q-ship by gun fire on the surface, a portion of the British crew took to the boats and by every device endeavoured to entice the Germans to close quarters. Once the enemy was within decisive range, the White Ensign was hoisted, the trap-doors fell and a deadly fire by trained gunners was opened upon them. By these means in 1915 and 1916 eleven U-boats were destroyed and the rest, rendered far more nervous of attacking by gun fire, were thrown back more and more upon their torpedoes. By the end of 1917 this process was complete. The German submarine commanders would not face the unequal gun-fire combat. The stratagem of the Q-ship was thus exhausted, and its last victim, U.88, perished in September, 1917.

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The action between the Q-ship *Dunraven* and U.61 affords a vivid example of this strange form of war. On the morning of August 8, 1917, H.M.S. *Dunraven*, disguised as an armed British merchant ship, was zigzagging towards the Bristol Channel, offering herself to submarine attack. At 10.58 a U-boat was sighted on the horizon two points before the starboard beam. The *Dunraven* continued to zigzag; and the U-boat, having approached submerged, broke surface at 11.43 on the starboard quarter and opened fire at about 5,000 yards. The *Dunraven*, playing her part as an armed merchantman, at once opened fire with her after gun (a 2½ pounder). Her Captain, Commander Gordon Campbell, ordered much smoke to be made from the funnels, but at the same time reduced speed to seven knots with an occasional zigzag to give the enemy a chance of closing. This the enemy did, and by 12.25 was scarcely a half-mile away. Meanwhile the *Dunraven's* unconcealed stern gun was intentionally firing short, and her Commander made *en clair* signals to deceive the U-boat, such as: 'Submarine chasing and shelling me'; 'Submarine overtaking me. Help. Come quickly'; 'Submarine

(position). Am abandoning ship.' At 12.40, when the U-boat shells were falling near, Commander Campbell made a cloud of steam to pretend boiler trouble, and gave the order 'Abandon ship.' The *Dunraven* stopped, blowing off steam, and turned her broadside so that the enemy could see the panic on board. The crew tumbled into the boats, one of which purposely was left hanging by her after davit. Thus encouraged, U.61 closed warily and continued firing. A shell went through the poop, exploding a depth charge and blowing up a Lieutenant. Two more shells crashed into the poop, setting it on fire. Clouds of dense smoke poured from the burning vessel, partially hiding from view the now swiftly approaching U-boat. The magazine and also the store of depth charges of the *Dunraven* being in the poop, it was obvious that an explosion must soon take place. The crew of the secret 4-inch gun immediately above the magazine stood to their post, waiting in grim anxiety for an opportunity which they were not destined to see. U.61 was now 'coming along nicely from port to starboard to pass 400 or 500 yards off.' In a few minutes the attacker would be on the weather side and a perfect target. Commander Campbell therefore had the option of opening fire under difficult conditions or of waiting longer for a far better chance. He waited.

At 12.58, when the U-boat was passing close astern of the *Dunraven* two depth charges and some cordite exploded. The 4-inch gun and the gun's crew were blown into the air. The gun itself was hurled on to the well deck, and the crew fell in various places—one man in the water amid a shower of scattered 4-inch ammunition. The 'open fire' buzzers of all the concealed guns were started by the explosion, and the gun on the after bridge (the only one bearing) opened fire. Had this misfortune been delayed for two minutes more, three guns could have fired on U.61 at 400 yards range. U.61, warned from the size of the explosion that it had a Q-ship to deal with, dived instantly. Commander Campbell, realizing that he was now about to be torpedoed, ordered the doctor to remove all the wounded and lock them up in the cabins, 'so as not to spoil the next part.' The fire hoses were turned on to the poop, which was a mass of flames. Although the deck was red hot, the magazine itself had not yet exploded. Meanwhile a warship had answered the *Dunraven's en clair* appeals for assistance, and fearing lest the action should be prematurely ended by her arrival, Commander Campbell signalled to her to keep away.

At 1.20 a torpedo was seen approaching from the starboard side. It struck abaft the engine room. The ruse of abandoning ship had already been exhausted so far as 'an armed merchant ship' was concerned. But the desperate condition of the *Dunraven* favoured



the hope that it might succeed in another form. There is a moment when even a warship must be abandoned. The order was therefore given, 'Q abandon ship.' The two secret guns which had been exposed were left visible, and an additional party of men were ordered to escape by a raft and a damaged boat.

U.61 was now in great doubt. Was the ship finally abandoned or not? For nearly an hour, showing only his periscope, the submarine circled round the heeling, burning ship at various ranges. During this period boxes of cordite and 4-inch shells were continually exploding in the flames. At 2.30 U.61 broke surface directly astern, where no gun was bearing, and at a few hundred yards shelled the stricken ship. Nearly all the shells either hit the *Dunraven* or fell close to the boats, on which U.61 also fired with a Maxim. Two shells burst on the bridge with serious effects. All this time Commander Campbell still waited for a favourable chance.

At 2.50, U.61 ceased shelling, submerged, and steamed past the *Dunraven's* port side at about 150 yards distance. Only a small part of the periscope was showing, but this revealed both depth and position. The long-awaited moment had now come. The *Dunraven* was armed not only with guns but with under-water torpedo tubes. Unfortunately she was heeling over so far that accurate aiming was spoiled. At 2.55 Commander Campbell fired a torpedo. The bubbles passed just ahead of the periscope; and the U-boat, unaware that destruction had missed her by a few inches, came slowly round on to the starboard side. This gave the *Dunraven* a second chance, and at 3.20 another torpedo was fired. Again the bubbles passed close to the periscope, and the deadly weapon can only have missed its mark by the narrowest margin. This time U.61 saw the peril and dived deep. Commander Campbell, having exhausted every device and with his ship in a sinking condition, signalled for assistance. Men-of-war, headed by the United States destroyer *Noma*, arrived from all quarters. The U-boat, whose periscope had again been seen, was hunted; and the *Dunraven*, after her crew had been rescued, foundered in the great approach route she had so faithfully defended. For his tireless perseverance in this action Commander Campbell received the Victoria Cross.

\* \* \* \* \*

By all these manœuvres and pressures the Germans were confronted during 1916 with the dilemma either of losing a great many U-boats in gun duels or Q-ship ambushades, or of resorting almost entirely to the torpedo with a vastly increased risk of offending neutrals. This complicated and nicely balanced dis-

cussion produced great stresses and cross-purposes between the German naval and civil authorities. The Naval Staff, headed by Tirpitz and Scheer, demanded that the authorities should sink at sight all vessels in the war zone. The Emperor and the Chancellor in their fear of offending neutrals insisted that the custom of visit and search should be complied with in the case of unarmed ships. But—protested the Naval Staff—which were the unarmed ships, and what would happen to the U-boat while she was making her enquiries? They declared moreover that unrestricted warfare would increase the sinkings to such an extent that Britain would be forced within six months to sue for peace.

The relative vulnerability of armed and unarmed ships can be judged from the following summary of U-boat attacks on British vessels between January 1, 1916, and January 25, 1917.

		Defensively armed ships	Unarmed ships.
Number attacked	.. ...	310	302
Sunk by torpedoes without warning	...	62	30
Sunk by gun fire or bombs	... ..	12	205
Escaped	... ..	236	67
Percentage escaped	... ..	76	22

These figures are illuminating and conclusive. They show that the U-boat was scarcely ever willing to face the gun duel with an armed vessel; and in consequence that with equal numbers of ships attacked the armed ship had nearly four times the unarmed ship's chance of escape. So much for the first great measure of defence.

\* \* \* \* \*

The principal means of *attacking* submarines under water was by dropping overboard charges which exploded at a certain depth. The shock of these explosions seriously jarred the submarine, and if near enough, deranged her mechanism or opened her joints. These depth charges were our earliest anti-submarine device. Gradually the methods of dropping them improved, and their size and number were multiplied many times. The arch-enemy of the submarine was the destroyer. She had the fastest speed, the greatest number of depth charges, and was herself cheaper than the quarry she hunted. When the periscope of a U-boat was seen in deep water all the available destroyers and motor launches and other fast small craft spread in an organized network over the surface so as to keep her down and force her to exhaust her accumulators; and alike in deep water or in shallow, the slightest indication of her whereabouts—an air bubble, an oil stain on the surface—drew the dreaded depth charges in a searching shower. As the struggle progressed the skill and methods of the

hunting vessel perpetually improved. Wonderful instruments were devised for detecting the beat of a submarine propeller; and with this and other indications a U-boat was sometimes pursued to death after an intermittent but unrelenting chase of more than thirty-six hours, during which the U-boat had perhaps replenished her electric batteries on the surface unseen two or three times.

The second anti-submarine weapon was the thin wire net hung in long strips across straits or narrow channels. These nets, buoyed on the surface with glass balls, were intended to foul the propeller of the U-boat and to cling about the hull. A U-boat thus enveloped, even if her motive power was not affected, would unconsciously be trailing a fatal tell-tale buoy about upon the surface, thus guiding her pursuers. To these light nets there were added in particular channels elaborately devised necklaces of mines joined with nets and watched by large numbers of trawlers with destroyers at ready call. Collision was another danger for this slow-moving, half-blind creature; and the ram of battleship, cruiser, destroyer or merchant ship on frequent occasions exacted the final forfeit.

Lastly, submarines stalked one another, and a U-boat while attacking a merchant ship or recharging its batteries upon the surface was on more than one occasion blown to pieces by the torpedo of a submerged pursuer of whose approach she was unconscious. The brutal features inseparable from the submarine attack on merchant vessels, and the miserable fate which so often overtook the passengers and civilian crew, inspired this warfare with exceptional fierceness. The attack upon warships, however grievous in loss of life, was considered fair war by the Royal Navy. The sinking of merchant vessels or neutral ships or hospital ships seemed to be a barbarous, treacherous and piratical act deserving every conceivable means of extermination. When we consider that nearly thirteen thousand British lives were destroyed by the German U-boats and that many were civilians, and the cruel and shocking incidents—to some extent inevitable—which characterised this warfare, and when we remember further the awful character of the stakes, the fact that several hundred German officers and men were rescued from the sea or allowed to surrender after scuttling their vessels is a tribute to the restraint of the deeply injured conqueror.

The Germans had originally decided to begin unrestricted submarine war on April 1, 1916. The threat of the United States to break off relations after the attack on the *Sussex* led at the end of the month to the permission being withdrawn. When Admiral Scheer, an ardent advocate of unrestricted warfare, received this order he intemperately recalled the High Sea fleet U-boats, refusing to permit them to work on the basis of visit

and search. From May to October therefore the campaign was practically confined to the Mediterranean and to the mine-layers of the Flanders flotilla. The relief thus afforded to Great Britain in northern waters was however both fleeting and illusory. The Mediterranean U-boats, working in accordance with German prize procedure, succeeded in sinking a large number of ships, and the German Naval Staff on October 6 ordered Scheer to resume restricted warfare with the North Sea flotillas. In the interval the number of U-boats available for active service had risen from 47 in March to 93 in November. The sinkings consequently increased rapidly when operations were resumed. The average monthly loss for the period April to September had been 131,000 tons; that from November to February rose to 276,000 tons. By the end of 1916 it was evident that the development of anti-submarine measures had not kept pace with the increasing intensity of the attack. The defensive measures instituted during 1915 had increased the number of armed merchantmen and auxiliary patrol vessels, but the problem of actually attacking and destroying U-boats was still in a rudimentary stage.

On February 1 the unrestricted attack began in full vigour, and the numbers of the U-boats continually increased. The losses of British, Allied and neutral vessels increased from 181 in January to 259 in February, 325 in March, and 423 in April; the corresponding figures in gross tonnage being 298,000 in January, 468,000 in February, 500,000 in March, and 849,000 in April. We now know that the German Naval Staff estimated that British shipping could be reduced at a rate of 600,000 tons a month, and that in five months at this rate Britain would be forced to her knees. In April alone the total world tonnage lost reached the appalling figure of 849,000 tons. The average monthly loss of British shipping during April, May and June from U-boats amounted to 409,300 tons, corresponding to a rate of nearly five million tons a year. By the end of May, apart from vessels employed on naval and military services or essential trade in distant waters, and undergoing repairs, there was less than six million tons of shipping available for all the supplies and trade with the United Kingdom. If losses continued at this rate and were equally divided among the services exposed to attack, the tonnage available for trade at the beginning of 1918<sup>1</sup> would be reduced to under five million tons, that is to say, an amount almost exactly equal to the gross sinkings in 1917. It seemed that Time, hitherto counted as an incorruptible Ally, was about to change sides.

Nor did the entry of the United States into the war shed any beam of hope on these dark waters. The longed-for American

### COMPARISON BETWEEN NUMBERS OF GERMAN SUBMARINES DESTROYED BY DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHIPS

AUXILIARY PATROL (Trawlers, Drifters, etc.)	37
DESTROYERS	31
SUBMARINES	17
"Q" SHIPS	11
AIRCRAFT	7
MERCHANT SHIPS	5
CRUISERS	3
BATTLESHIPS	1

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PRINCIPAL WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION

MINES	[REDACTED]	4.
DEPTH CHARGES	[REDACTED]	31
GUNFIRE	[REDACTED]	30
RAM	[REDACTED]	19
TORPEDO	[REDACTED]	17
CLOWN UP BY GERMANS (To avoid capture)	[REDACTED]	14
WRECKS AND ACCIDENTS	[REDACTED]	10
MINE NETS	[REDACTED]	7
INTERRED	[REDACTED]	7
SWEEPS, ETC.	[REDACTED]	3

### COMPARISON BETWEEN NUMBERS OF GERMAN SUBMARINES DESTROYED BY GREAT BRITAIN AND HER ALLIES

TOTAL GERMAN SUBMARINE LOSSES .....	199
TOTAL DESTROYED BY THE BRITISH NAVY.....	175
(Including number blown up to avoid capture)	
TOTAL DESTROYED BY THE FRENCH NAVY .....	3
" " " " U.S.A. " .....	2
" " " " RUSSIAN " .....	2

**Data compiled from British and German sources**

resources required a vast array of British tonnage to transport them to the Front. The patrol system in the approaches to the English Channel and South of Ireland had completely broken down. Not only were the limited numbers of the patrol vessels unable to protect the shipping, but their mere presence assisted the submarines to find the traffic routes. In April the great approach route to the south-west of Ireland was becoming a veritable cemetery of British shipping, in which large vessels were sunk regularly day by day about 200 miles from land. During this month it was calculated that one in four merchant ships leaving the United Kingdom never returned. The U-boat was rapidly undermining not only the life of the British islands, but the foundations of the Allies' strength; and the danger of their collapse in 1918 began to loom black and imminent.

The stern pressure of events reacted upon Admiralty organisation. In May the Naval Staff was given an appropriate position on the Board by the merging of the office of First Sea Lord and Chief of Staff, while the addition of a Deputy and Assistant who could each act with Board authority accelerated business and relieved the Chief of Staff of a mass of work. The Operations Division, hitherto troubled like Martha over many things, had not been able to think far enough ahead. In May a small planning section was instituted, charged with a study of policy and preparation of plans; and this was later in the year expanded into a separate Division. Younger officers were called to the Admiralty and more responsibility was given to them. Without this reorganization of the Staff, the measures that defeated the U-boat, even if conceived, could not have been executed. These measures took a threefold form: first, the preparation and launching of extensive mining plans; secondly, the further development of research and supply in the technical fields of mines, depth charges and hydrophones; and thirdly, the decisive step, the institution of a convoy system which involved the escort and control of all merchant shipping.

I had instituted the convoy system for troopships crossing the oceans at the beginning of the war. Then the attack by faster German light cruisers was the danger. The guns of an obsolete battleship or heavy cruiser could certainly drive away any hostile raiders then loose upon the surface of the seas. We had also from the beginning used destroyer escorts to convoy troopships in and out through the submarine zone. In no case did any mishap occur. It did not however seem reasonable to expect similar results from the convoy system in the case of attack by submarines upon merchant ships. On the contrary it seemed obvious that hostile submarines would work more damage in the midst of a crowd of merchantmen than against isolated vessels; and it was

further evident that the escorting warships would themselves be among the targets of the enemy torpedoes. The U-boat attacks on trade in 1915 and the early part of 1916 seemed to have been confined within tolerable limits by the numbers of merchant vessels at sea, by the variety of their routes and ports, by the uncertainty of their times of arrival, and above all by the size of the sea. The system of watching and patrolling in the greatest strength possible the confluences of trade had worked well against the German raiding cruisers, and for the first two years of the war the Admiralty relied upon it against the U-boats without serious misadventure.

When under the pressure of ever-increasing losses the remedy of convoys was again advocated by the younger officers of the Admiralty War Staff, it encountered opposition from practically every quarter. Every squadron and every naval base was clamant for destroyers, and convoy meant taking from them even those that they had. There would be delays due to assembling. There must be reduction in speed of the faster vessels and congestion of ships in port. The scale and difficulties of the task were exaggerated, and it was argued that the larger the number of ships in company, the greater the risk from submarines. This convincing logic could only be refuted by the proof of facts. In January, 1917, the official Admiralty opinion was expressed as follows:—

‘A system of several ships sailing in company as a convoy is not recommended in any area where submarine attack is a possibility. It is evident that the larger the number of ships forming a convoy, the greater the chance of a submarine being able to attack successfully and the greater the difficulty of the escort in preventing such an attack.’

The French and United States naval authorities were also opposed to the convoy system, and at a Conference held in February, 1917, representative Masters of merchant ships took the same view.

Now let us see what was overlooked in this high, keen and earnest consensus. The size of the sea is so vast that the difference between the size of a convoy and the size of a single ship shrinks in comparison almost to insignificance. There was in fact very nearly as good a chance of a convoy of forty ships in close order slipping unperceived between the patrolling U-boats as there was for a single ship; and each time this happened, forty ships escaped instead of one. Here then was the key to the success of the convoy system against U-boats. The concentration of ships greatly reduced the number of targets in a given area and thus made it more difficult for the submarine to locate their prey.

Moreover, the convoys were easily controlled and could be quickly deflected by wireless from areas known to be dangerous at any given moment. Finally the destroyers, instead of being dissipated on patrol over wide areas, were concentrated at the point of the hostile attack, and opportunities of offensive action frequently arose. Thirteen U-boats were actually destroyed while endeavouring to molest convoys. This fear of instant retaliation from convoy escorts had a demoralizing effect upon the enemy, and consequently U-boat attacks were not always pressed home.

Most of this was still unproved in the early days of 1917. There stood only the fact that troopship convoys had always been escorted through the submarine zones during 1915 and 1916 and had enjoyed complete immunity from attack. The highest professional opinion remained opposed to convoy as a defence against U-boats, and personally I rested under that impression. I had no official position at that time, but I had confidential relations with Ministers and was informed both upon the discussion and the facts. I therefore wrote in March for the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Edward Carson, the following note. It was intended to offer an alternative means of gaining the advantages claimed by its advocates for the convoy system without running counter to the solid objections of the naval authorities. I print it because it throws a contemporary light upon the problem and because, although the method proposed was rejected in favour of a simpler and more practical plan, the reasonings are sound.

*March, 1917.*

It is assumed for the purposes of this argument that the Germans use about fifty submarines at a time in three reliefs; that every submarine remains out about a month and takes (except in the case of the Zeebrugge boats) from two to three days to get to its beat.

The number of enemy submarines actually on the watch is not large enough to allow of any great concentration: they must be widely dispersed to cover the whole extended approaches to these islands. There cannot be any large number in any one station. The amount of damage which a submarine can do is limited by its store of torpedoes, and also by the hours of the day. Tackling even a single ship involves a considerable time. What a submarine wants in order to make its best bag is a steady trickle of shipping day after day more or less evenly dispersed along all the routes approaching these islands. It is arguable that *a greater concentration both of shipping and of the means of protection,*



now here now there along particular routes and at particular times, would sensibly reduce the proportion of losses.

The measures suggested are as follows:—

Tell all ships which have wireless who are approaching our shores and expect to enter the area of submarine activity by nightfall—say Monday night—to steam back on their course for thirty-six hours and then to resume their voyage. Tell all ships who would similarly arrive on Tuesday night to steam back on their course for twenty-four hours; and all ships that would similarly arrive on Wednesday night to steam back on their course for twelve hours—and then in all cases resume their voyage. The result of this would be to create four blank days and to quadruple the volume of shipping arriving in the danger zone on the fourth day. For three days therefore the German submarines would be useless and would find no prey. On the fourth day they would be confronted with a crowd of shipping out of which it is possible, owing to their limited numbers, that they could not take a proportionate toll. It is clear that you could afford to lose four times as much shipping on the fourth day as on any one of the four days without being worse off. If the number of submarines remains few and constant—their activity being in many respects a limited factor—while the volume of traffic is quadrupled, there is a very fair prospect of the proportion of losses not increasing in anything like the same ratio as the proportion of shipping. One knows that if you want a big bag of pheasants you beat them out of the cover in twos and threes, whereas if it is intended to shoot the cover over again the whole lot should be driven out as quickly as possible in the largest numbers. If rabbits run across a ride past a limited number of guns, their best chance is to run unexpectedly and all at once. It is quite possible that these simple analogies have a wider application. . . .

There is no reason to believe that losses are proportionate to the volume of traffic; the variations from day to day effectively prove this. There is every reason to believe that losses are limited by increased protection. The ships fitted with wireless are the most important and the largest; they are the ones which raise the tonnage totals. The experiment applied to them alone, as it necessarily must be, would be well worth while attempting. But if it were successful, the universal adoption of wireless in our merchant service would follow as a matter of course. . . .

The intermittence and uncertainty which may be imparted to the movements of our shipping by the regulation of *time* can be supplemented by the variation of *routes*. After one

accumulation of shipping has been released upon (say) the Bristol Channel, the next might be directed on Liverpool or the Clyde—all the available protection being meanwhile concentrated so far as possible upon the route about to be used.

It fell to Sir Edward Carson's lot during his tenure as First Lord to face the most anxious and trying period of the naval war. During those eight months the U-boat sinkings of merchantmen reached their terrible climax. It was under his administration that the peak was surmounted and most of the important decisions of principle were taken by which the peril was ultimately overcome. The trial of the convoy system was urged upon the naval authorities by the Cabinet, and in this the Prime Minister took a decisive part.

At the end of April, 1917, the Director of the Anti-Submarine Division definitely advocated the introduction of convoys, and the first one left Gibraltar on May 10. It was entirely successful, and regular convoys commenced from the United States on June 4. Instructions were issued on June 22 to extend the system to Canadian ports, and on July 31 similar orders were issued for the South Atlantic trade. The entry of the United States facilitated convoys by opening her harbours as ports of assembly and by the precious aid of a number of her destroyers for escort work. More than a quarter of the whole of the escorts across the Atlantic were provided by American destroyers, and the comradeship of this hard service forms an ineffaceable tradition for the two navies.

The convoy organization will for ever stand as a monument to the constancy and courage of the Royal Navy and Mercantile Marine. No credit is too high for the officers and men who without previous training navigated these fleets of forty or fifty ships in close formation through all the winds that blew. No service ever carried out by the Navy was of greater value to the State than that of the escort vessels. Those who have served in small ships will realize the skill, faithfulness and hardihood required to carry out this duty day after day, month after month, in wild weather and wintry seas without breakdown or failure. The control and arrangements of the Admiralty and the Ministry of Shipping became more thorough and perfect with every week that passed.

The convoy system was at first confined to homeward-bound vessels. The percentage of sinkings in the outward sailings at once began to rise. In August, 1917, convoy was extended to outward-bound vessels. The diagram (pp. 1240-1241) reveals at a glance the triumph of convoy. By the end of October, 1917, 99 homeward convoys, comprising over 1,500 steamers of

a deadweight capacity of 10,656,000 tons, had been brought in with the loss of only 10 ships torpedoed while actually in convoy, and of 14 which had become separated.

While convoy was vastly improving the protection of trade, all methods of attacking the U-boats were progressively developed, and the rate of destruction steadily rose. In April, 1917, British submarine flotillas were based upon Scapa Flow, Lough Swilly on the North, and Killybegs on the West coast of Ireland, and began to lie in wait for U-boats passing north-about to attack the great trade route. At the same time in the Southern part of the North Sea the small British 'C' Class submarines were released from harbour defence for the same duties. This method by which submarine vessels preyed on each other yielded substantial results. Seven U-boats were destroyed by it in 1917 and six in 1918. The threat of submarine attack also forced the U-boats to submerge much more frequently and for longer periods on their passage, with consequent delays in reaching their beats.

The mine, however, proved to be the most effective killing weapon. The Admiralty, before the war, had not expected the mine to play an important part. In a war on the surface of the sea the weaker navy would no doubt use such a weapon to hamper the movements of its superior antagonist; but for the stronger fleet, the fewer minefields the better. These conclusions, which at the time were not ill-founded, were upset by the changes for which the prolongation of the war gave time. At the outset the British mines were few and inefficient. It was even stated in a German Order that 'British mines generally do not explode.' This was an exaggeration: but we were certainly at fault in the matter.

At the end of April, 1916, an attempt was made by the Dover Force, under Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, to blockade the Flanders U-boats by a long and extensive barrage off the Belgian coast. This was completed by May 7. It consisted of 18 miles of moored mines and nets guarded from May to October by day patrols. U.B.13 was destroyed by one of its mines the day after the barrage was laid, and an immediate diminution of U-boat activity in the North Sea and the Channel followed. This was not unnaturally attributed to the new barrage and gave the Dover Command an exaggerated idea of its value. We now know that it was to Admiral Scheer's impulsive recall of the High Sea Fleet U-boat flotillas, and not to the Dover barrage that the marked improvement of these months was due, for only one U-boat was destroyed by its mines; nor did it seriously impede their movements in and out.

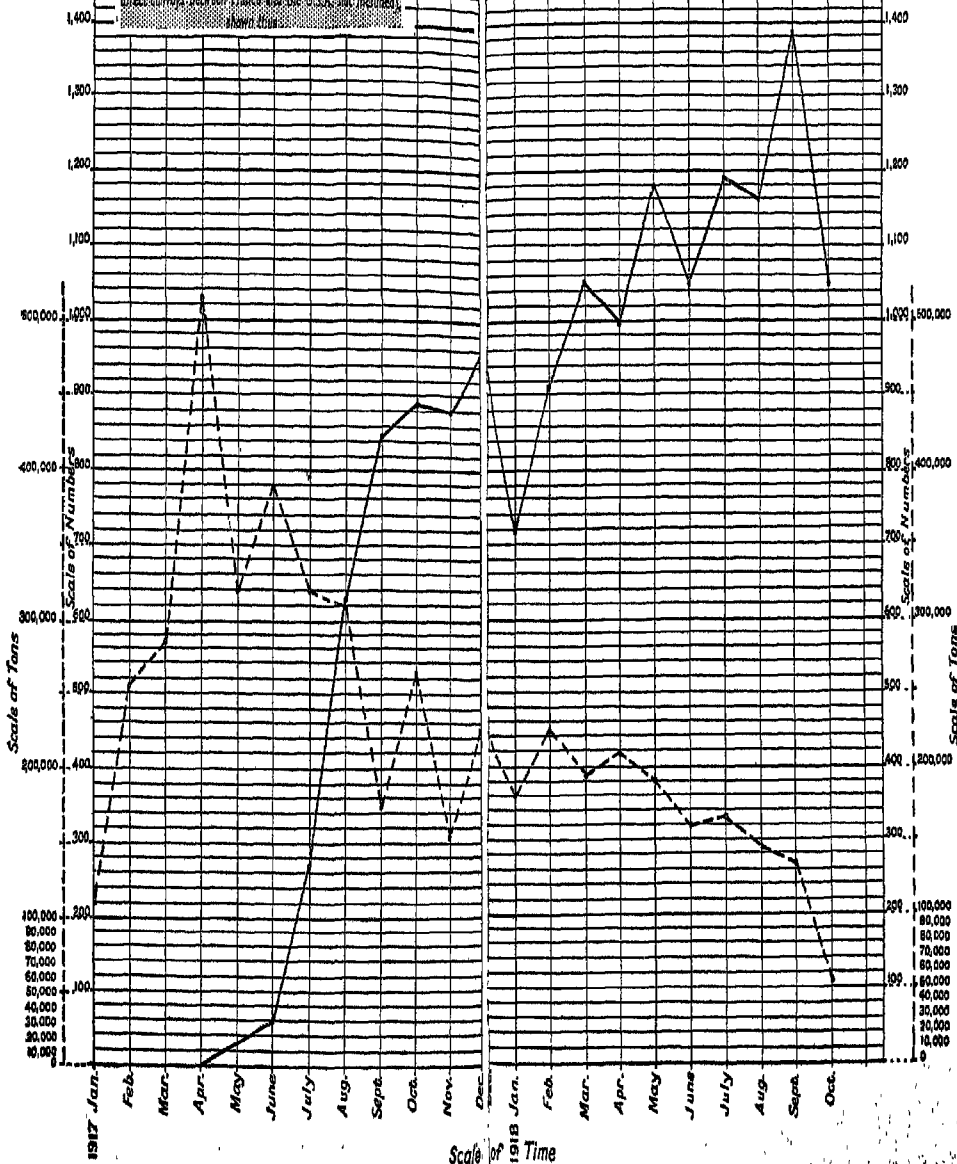
Efforts to improve the quality of the British mines had been

unceasing since the beginning of the war. It was not until the autumn of 1917 that the new 'horned' mines became available in large quantities. The improvement of the new type upon the old cannot be better measured than by the fact that out of forty-one U-boats destroyed by mines only five were prior to September, 1917. No less than 15,700 mines were laid in the Heligoland Bight during 1917 and 21,000 more in 1918, mainly by the 20th Destroyer Flotilla working from the Humber. This attempt to block in the U-boats developed into a protracted struggle between British mine-layers and German mine-sweepers. The enemy was forced to escort the U-boats both on their inward and outward journey with a whole array of mine-sweepers, of specially constructed ships with concrete-filled bows called 'barrier-breakers,' and torpedo boats. These escorts had to be protected, and from 1917 onwards the main occupation of the High Sea Fleet was the support of its sweeping forces working far afield on the submarine routes. As time went on the difficulties of egress and ingress increased. The 'ways' or swept channels in the Bight were frequently closed, and in October, 1917, homeward-bound submarines began to be sent round by the Kattegat. Early in 1918 about 1,400 deep mines were laid in the Kattegat but could not be patrolled. The intensive mining of the Bight failed to achieve success because of the difficulties of attacking the German sweeping craft and the lack of destroyers for the patrol of the Kattegat. The effort however destroyed several U-boats, and increased their time on passage to and from the trade routes.

During 1917 the failure of the 1916 Barrage across the Dover Straits had been total. From February to November U-boats continued to pass through it at the rate of about twenty-four a month. The Dover passage saved a small Flanders U-boat nearly eight days on its fourteen-days' cruise, and a larger boat from the Bight six days out of twenty-five. It was decided to make a fresh attempt with all the improved appliances now at hand. On November 21 a new deep minefield was laid between the Varne and Gris Nez. When no fewer than twenty-one U-boats passed through this in the first fortnight, a sharp controversy arose at the Admiralty. Some authorities supported the contentions of the Dover Command that the barrage was largely successful and that additional patrolling was impracticable. Others held that an intensive patrol and the use of searchlights and flares at night to make the U-boats dive into the mines would achieve great results. About this time, and partly in connection with this discussion, Sir John Jellicoe was replaced as First Sea Lord by Admiral Wemyss, and Admiral Bacon was succeeded in the Dover Command by Admiral Keyes. Keyes

# DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE INCIDENCE OF THE CONVOY SYSTEM ON BRITISH MERCANTILE SINKINGS

Gross tonnage of British Merchant Ships sunk per month by submarines from January, 1917, onwards, shown thus:—  
Number of ships in ocean convoys sailing from and arriving in Great Britain per month (Case-channels, Scandinavian and direct convoys between France and the U.S.A. not included) shown thus:—



revolutionized the situation. He redoubled the patrols, and by night the barrage from end to end became as bright as Piccadilly. The German destroyers from Ostend and Zeebrugge attempted to break down the patrols by sudden raids. They were repulsed in fierce night actions and the watch maintained with ever-increasing efficiency. Nine U-boats perished in the Dover area between January and May, 1918, and four more by September. As early as February the Bight boats ceased to use the Straits, and by April the Flanders boats had largely abandoned it. In September only two boats passed through, one of which was destroyed on its return.

The famous story of the blocking of Zeebrugge on St. George's Day by Admiral Keyes and the Dover Force cannot be repeated here. It may well rank as the finest feat of arms in the Great War, and certainly as an episode unsurpassed in the history of the Royal Navy. The harbour was completely blocked for about three weeks and was dangerous to U-boats for a period of two months. Although the Germans by strenuous efforts partially cleared the entrance after some weeks for U-boats, no operations of any importance were ever again carried out by the Flanders destroyers. The results of Admiral Keyes' command at Dover reduced the Allied losses in the English Channel from about twenty to six a month, and the minefields laid by the Flanders boats fell from thirty-three a month in 1917 to six a month in 1918. These results, which constitute a recognizable part of the general victory, were achieved notwithstanding the fact that the numbers of U-boats in commission were maintained by new building at about two hundred.

The attempts to mine in the Heligoland Bight had been frustrated by the German sweeping operations, closely supported by the High Sea Fleet. It was thought that a more distant barrage, under the direct watch and ward of the Grand Fleet, might succeed. In 1918 an ambitious scheme for establishing a line of guarded minefields across the 180 miles of water between Norway and the Orkney Islands was developed by the British and American Navies. Enormous quantities of materials, regardless of cost or diversion of effort, were employed upon this supreme manifestation of defensive warfare. The large centre section was laid entirely by Americans, the Orkney section by the British, and the Norway section by the two Navies in combination. The Americans used a special type of mine with antennæ that exploded the charge on coming into contact with the metal hull. They laid no less than 57,000 mines, a large number of which exploded prematurely shortly after being laid. The British contribution was about 13,000

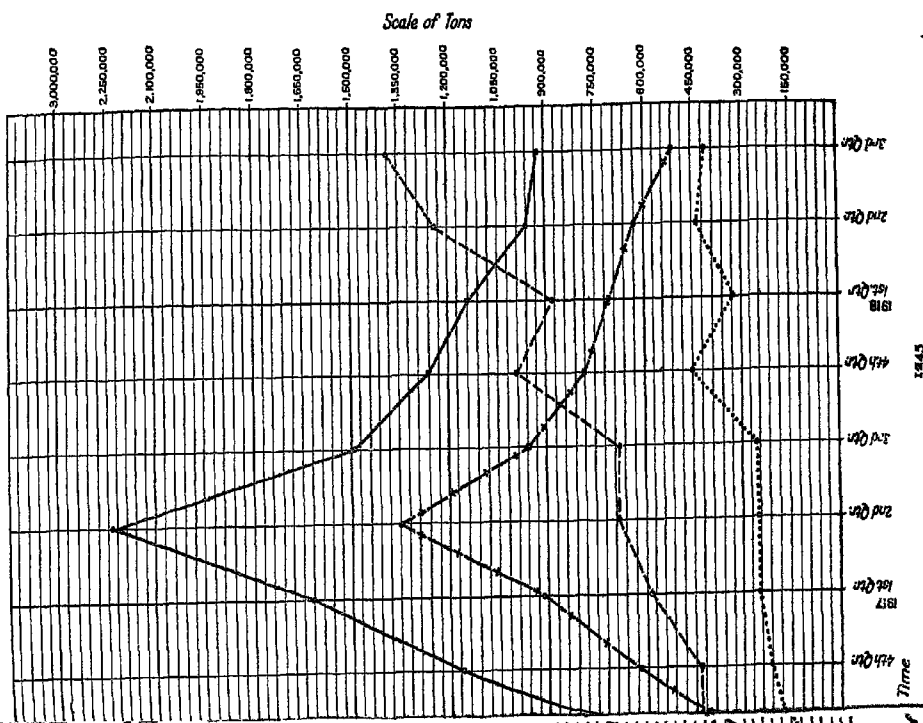
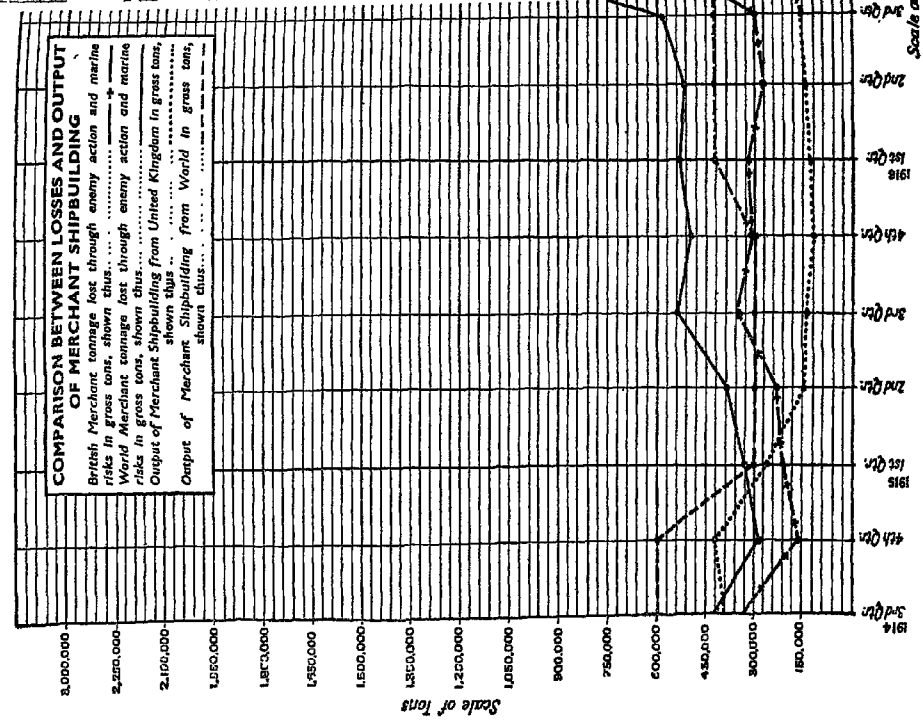
mines, but some of these were not laid deep enough for surface craft to pass over and had in consequence to be swept up. The efficiency of this enormous material effort cannot be judged, for the minefield was barely completed when the Armistice was signed. It is known however that two U-boats were damaged on the centre section, and four may possibly have been destroyed on the Orkney section.

The ever-increasing efficiency of the Anti-Submarine Organization during 1918 also mastered the mine-laying tactics of the U-boats. Closer co-operation between the British Intelligence and Mine Sweeping Divisions, the rapid distribution of news, the firmer control of shipping and the use of the 'Otter'<sup>1</sup> all played their part. One hundred and twenty-three British merchant ships had been sunk by German mines in 1917. In 1918 this number was reduced to 10. All other anti-submarine devices were developed with ceaseless ingenuity. Aircraft, hydrophones and special types of mines levied an increasing toll upon the U-boats. During 1918 high hopes were based on systematic hunting tactics, and trawler flotillas equipped with ingenious listening devices were assembled in the northern area for this purpose. Several contacts were made, but the U-boats escaped by going dead slow so that their movements could not be detected by the instruments; and we could not provide enough destroyers over such wide areas to exhaust their accumulators.

The final phase of the U-boat war saw the rôles of the combatants reversed. It was the U-boat and not the merchant ship that was hunted. The experiences of U.B.110 on her first cruise may serve as an example. She sailed from Zeebrugge on July 5, 1918. Even before she had joined the Flanders Flotilla she had been attacked by two aeroplanes. Every day from July 7 onwards her log records the dropping of depth charges around her in ever-increasing numbers until the 18th, when twenty-six exploded close at hand. She was only able to fire two torpedoes during the cruise. The first one damaged an oil ship, but she could not see the result of the second owing to an immediate and violent counter-attack by destroyers. On the 19th, when attempting to attack a convoy, her diving rudders were damaged by a depth charge dropped from a motor launch; and while endeavouring to submerge she was rammed and sunk by a destroyer. In these latter days a Flanders U-boat could hope for only six voyages before meeting its dark doom. The unceasing presentiment of a sudden and frightful death beyond human sight or succour, the shuddering concussions of the depth

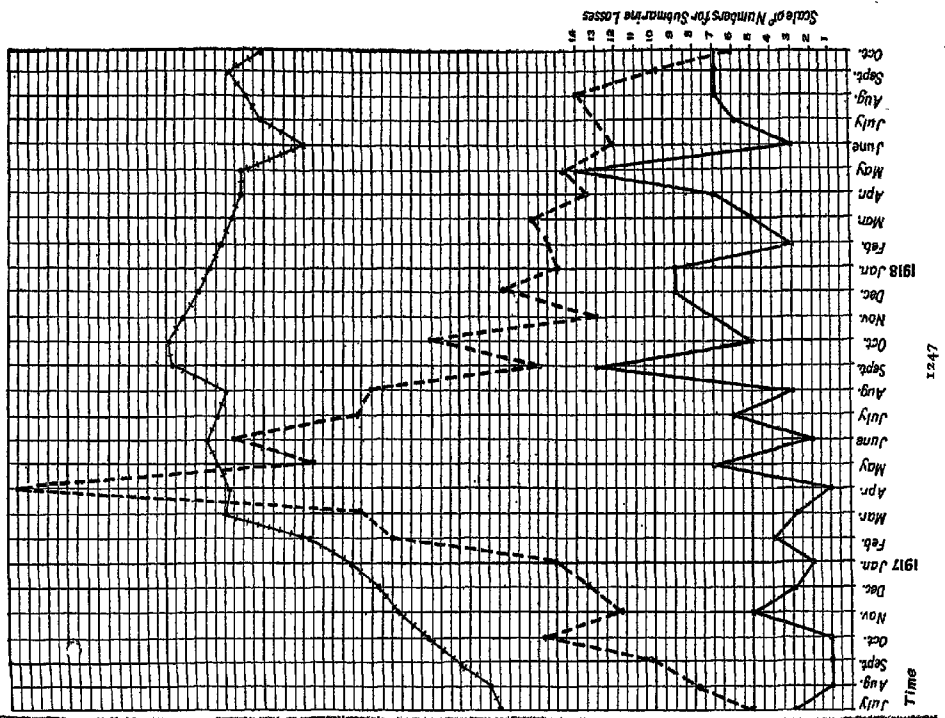
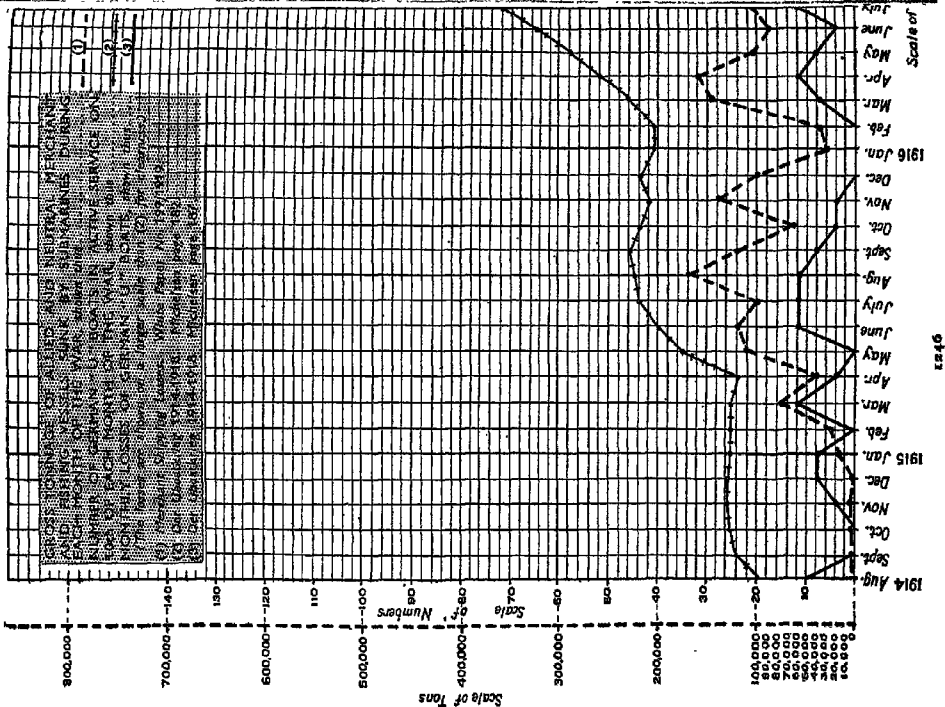
<sup>1</sup> A species of submerged wire cutter towed on both bows for cutting the mooring ropes of mines.

**COMPARISON BETWEEN LOSSES AND OUTPUT  
OF MERCHANT SHIPBUILDING**  
British Merchant tonnage lost through enemy action and marine  
risks in gross tons, shown thus.....→  
World Merchant tonnage lost through enemy action and marine  
risks in gross tons, shown thus.....→  
Output of Merchant Shipbuilding from United Kingdom in gross tons,  
shown thus.....→  
Output of Merchant Shipbuilding from World in gross tons,  
shown thus.....→



Scale of Tons





charges, the continual attacks of escort vessels, the fear of annihilation at any moment from mines, the repeated hair-breadth escapes, produced a state of nervous tension in the U-boat crews. Their original high morale declined rapidly during 1918 under an intolerable strain. The surrender of more than one undamaged submarine and numerous cases of boats 'putting back for small repairs a few days after leaving harbour showed that even in this valiant age the limits of human endurance had been reached.

The various stages of the U-boat war and its strange conditions have now been examined. No sooner had the German war leaders taken their irrevocable decision to begin the unlimited attack on commerce than the Russian Revolution, by rendering their situation less desperate, removed the principal impulsion. No sooner had the unlimited U-boat warfare forced the United States into the field against Germany than the effectiveness of the U-boats began to decline. The month that saw President Wilson jingling among his Cavalrymen to the Senate to cast the life energy of a nation of a hundred and twenty millions into the adverse scales marked also the zenith of the U-boat attack. Never again did Germany equal the April sinkings. Many months of grievous losses and haunting anxiety lay before the Islanders and their Allies, and immense diversions—some needless—of straitened resources hampered their military effort. But with every month the sense of increasing mastery grew stronger. At one time the plotted curves of sinkings and replacements which our graphs revealed seemed a veritable 'writing on the wall.' But the awful characters faded steadily. The autumn of 1917, which was to have seen the fulfilment of German dreams, came, passed, and left us safer. By the end of the year it was certain we should not succumb. It was certain moreover that the war could be carried on until the power of the United States could if necessary be fully exerted on the battlefields of Europe. By the middle of 1918 the submarine campaign had been definitely defeated; and though new U-boats replaced those destroyed, every month added to their perils, to the restriction of their depredations and to the demoralization of their crews. The weapon purchased so dearly by the German war leaders had first been blunted and then broken in their hands. It remained for them only to pay the price, and meet the fury of the world in arms. But from this they did not shrink.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION IN THE WEST

The Man-Power Crisis—The Gathering Storm—Cabinet and G.H.Q.—My Memorandum of December 8—Man-Power and Strategy—Proposals for Increasing the Supply—Further Resources—General Summary of British Resources—My Speech at Bedford—The Policy of the War Cabinet—Extension of the British Front—The General Allied Reserve—The Versailles Committee—Sir William Robertson Dismissed—A Visit to the Canadians—The New Defensive Tactics—Sir Henry Wilson—His Qualities and Services—A Favourable Atmosphere—My Survey of March 5—How to obtain a Decision—Means of Continuous Forward Progression—The Four New Arms—A Different Distribution—Mechanical Developments—The Mechanical Battle—The Reduced Scale and Intensity of the War—The Agonizing Deadlock—The 300 Kilometre Battle.

**A**N acute crisis in Man-Power followed the prodigal campaign of 1917, and a prolonged and searching examination of our remaining resources was made by the War Cabinet. The British Infantry, on whom the brunt of the slaughter had fallen, were woefully depleted. The battalions were far below their proper strength, and even so, largely composed of new drafts. The losses of the artillery both in men and guns destroyed were also most severe. The loss in officers was out of all proportion even to the great losses of the rank and file. The task had throughout demanded an unprecedented degree of sacrifice from regimental officers. More than five thousand had been killed outright and over fifteen thousand had been wounded in the Passchendaele offensive. This loss was especially difficult to replace; could never in fact be fully replaced. We had every reason to expect that the main fighting of 1918 in France would fall upon Great Britain. The French, who had begun with the unequalled slaughter of 1914 and had ever since been engaged on a scale of nearly one hundred and twenty divisions, must necessarily and naturally be expected to reserve their remaining strength—grand it proved to be—for supreme emergencies. It was now certain that the United States, in spite of their utmost efforts and passionate desire to share the suffering, could not play more than a minor part in the actual battles. Only eight or nine American divisions were in fact due to enter the line before the summer was far spent. Substantial help had been sent perforce from the Western Front to Italy, and none

could be expected in return. We had also almost the whole burden of the war against Turkey on our hands; and Allenby, so far from being able to release divisions, was continually pressing not only for drafts but for reinforcements. Additional forces, both British and Indian, were required for the army in Mesopotamia; and finally the Salonica Front, on which we bore our share, was a constant drain. It was in these grave circumstances that we had to anticipate a German onslaught far exceeding in power and fury anything that had yet been experienced.

The final collapse of Russia had liberated enormous masses of German and Austrian troops. During the whole of the winter the movement of divisions and guns from the Eastern to the Western Front, and to a lesser extent against Italy, was unceasing. How great this movement actually was we could not measure exactly, but the Intelligence reports, with which I endeavoured to saturate myself, revealed week after week an unending flow of men and material to the West. Surveying the forces on both sides in the main theatre, it could not be doubted that by the spring Germany would have for the first time in the war, not even excepting the original invasion, a large numerical preponderance on the Western Front. Moreover, the divisions coming from Russia would, by the opening of the new campaign, have had nearly a year without serious fighting in which to recuperate and train. All our fighting units, on the other hand, had been decimated fivefold in the last six months of 1917. Finally, in addition to the masses of German and Austrian artillery released from the Russian Front, the enemy had captured at least four thousand guns from Russia and two thousand from Italy, together with immense supplies of war material of all kinds.

Sir Douglas Haig vehemently and naturally called for all the officers and men required to bring his divisions up to full strength at the earliest possible moment. Robertson supported him, and was evidently seriously alarmed. From my central position between the Army and the War Cabinet, with, I believe, the whole information available in my possession and with constant intimate access to the Prime Minister, I never ceased to press for the immediate reinforcement of Sir Douglas Haig. Mr. Lloyd George viewed with horror the task imposed on him of driving to the shambles by stern laws the remaining manhood of the nation. Lads of eighteen and nineteen, elderly men up to forty-five, the last surviving brother, the only son of his mother (and she a widow), the father the sole support of the family, the weak, the consumptive, the thrice wounded—all must now prepare themselves for the scythe. To meet the German onslaught when it came—if it came—everything must be thrown in; but

the Prime Minister feared lest our last resources should be expended in another Passchendaele.

It was in December that the shadow fell darkly upon the military mind. Up till then the Cabinet had been assured that all was going well in the West, and that—granted the drafts—the New Year could be faced with confidence. At the Ministry of Munitions we had long been instructed to prepare for a renewed thirty weeks' offensive beginning in the earliest spring. With the end of Passchendaele came the end of illusions. The sudden sinister impression was sustained by the General Staff. The cry for a fresh offensive died away. The mood swung round to pure defence—and against heavy odds. It was a revolution at once silent and complete. I responded to it with instant relief. The War Cabinet however continued for some time to rest themselves upon the confident declarations of the Generals made in September in advocacy of perseverance at Passchendaele. They did not readily conform to the military *volte-face* and were sceptical of tales so utterly at variance with those of a few weeks before.

I urged that the Cabinet should send all the men that were needed to reconstitute the Army, and should at the same time forbid absolutely any resumption of the offensive. The Prime Minister however did not feel that, if the troops were once in France, he would be strong enough to resist those military pressures for an offensive which had so often overborne the wiser judgment of Statesmen. He therefore held, with all his potent influence, to a different policy. He sanctioned only a moderate reinforcement of the army, while at the same time gathering in England the largest possible numbers of reserves. In this way he believed he would be able alike to prevent a British offensive and to feed the armies during the whole course of the fearful year which was approaching. This was in fact achieved. But I held, and hold still, that the War Cabinet should have been resolute, as I believe it would have been found strong enough, at once to support and to restrain the High Command in France. I set forth in the following secret Memorandum my views in detail.

#### MAN-POWER AND THE SITUATION.

##### *To the War Cabinet.*

*December 8, 1917.*

1. IT is not possible to settle the question of man-power without a clear idea of the plan of campaign. The Ministry of National Service is naturally bound to tabulate the demands of the various Departments, set their existing resources against them, and show the resulting deficit. But these demands are a mere aggregate of separate and independent departmental

requirements and not, as they should be, the expression of a general scheme of war. If a plan of campaign suited to the actual facts of next year, as far as we can foresee them, were made out, it seems certain to me that the total demand could be substantially reduced.

2. For instance, the calculations of military requirements have been based upon a continuance of the kind of offensive action which we have pursued during the last two years, whereas the balance of forces next year will clearly not permit a continuance of that policy on the same scale nor to the same degree. It is vital to us to have in the field at the opening of the Spring campaign a British army stronger and better equipped than we have ever had before, because the burden thrown upon it is going to be greater than before. On the other hand, this army, once raised and restored to its full efficiency and strength, must be husbanded and not consumed. It must be an army crouched and not sprawled; an army with a large proportion of divisions in reserve at full strength, resting and training; an army sustained by every form of mechanical equipment, including, especially, tanks and aeroplanes, and possessing the greatest possible lateral mobility. What is required therefore is an immediate large draft of men to raise the army to its fullest strength and to give it the greatest possible springing power and striking power. At the same time this power, when gained, must be scrupulously and jealously guarded and even hoarded, and not reduced or impaired except to meet vital emergencies.

These two aspects must be kept simultaneously in mind—

- (a) An immediate raising of the army to the highest possible strength; and
- (b) Its jealous conservation when raised.

Our rôle and only chance of escaping defeat is to bridge the long intervening months before the Americans can become a decisive factor; and as we cannot tell what emergencies we may have to meet in the meanwhile, we must not only mobilise our greatest possible strength, but keep it in hand to guard against unforeseeable contingencies.

3. To say that we should raise our army to the highest possible offensive power by no means implies that it should be immediately launched upon a general offensive. To say, on the other hand, that the general rôle of the British armies will be 'an active defensive' by no means precludes the striking of sudden heavy blows on our own initiative, nor the power of vehement counter-attack. There is therefore great scope of a certain number of brilliant military episodes of first-rate importance. The dominant principle, however, from which

there must be no swerving, is that we shall be a holding force, endeavouring to maintain with the least possible loss, a situation which cannot be improved decisively except by the arrival of a great American army....

5. A Commander-in-Chief in the field is entitled to know from his Government—

(a) What his general rôle is to be.

(b) What are to be his monthly incomes of men and shell tonnage.

(c) What condition the army is to be left in at the end of the campaign in point of numbers and efficiency.

Within these limits, his discretion should be unfettered.

6. The Ministry of National Service assumes that the demand of the navy for 90,000 additional men should have priority above army needs, and he makes apparently no provision for combing or dilution, either in the navy or in its civil establishments. Again, it is to be observed that the naval demands for men cannot be considered except in reference to the general plan of war. If the navy had plans for offensive or amphibious action which might be expected to cause the enemy to withdraw large numbers of men from the existing battle fronts, justification for a substantial increase in the manpower at their disposal would be provided. But if, as may well be, it is considered that there are no prudent and practicable means of using the navy in this manner, then it is difficult to see what good reasons there can be to increase the number of men at the disposal of the Admiralty. We are far stronger in proportion to the German fleet than we were at the beginning of the war, when they did not venture to attack us. We are probably employing, apart from shipbuilding, three or four times as many men for naval purposes as they are, and in addition to this, besides the navies of the European Allies, there is the American fleet—the third strongest in the world.

There are many more detailed aspects of the use of naval personnel which demand instructed and critical examination. In a crisis like this every man counts, and no department or branch of our fighting forces has a right to special privileges.

The construction of warships other than for anti-submarine warfare also makes a heavy demand on labour and valuable materials.

7. There are at present employed on shipbuilding and munitions work over 3,000,000 men and women. A plan can be submitted for providing from this total 100,000 category A. men for the Army. The plan would include the 'clean cut' for category A. men below the age of 24, who are estimated at about 55,000, in munitions and shipbuilding. The loss

on shipbuilding and marine engineering would have to be made good by transferring older men from other munitions work. This would be practicable. . . .

9. The next great resource of man-power which should now be drawn upon is the army at home. This at present comprises upwards of 1,400,000 men who are explained or excused in various ways. In order that this resource shall be rendered effective for the armies on the Western front, we must face the institution of defensive battalions for holding quiet and non-significant sectors of the line. The actual military arrangements obviously require careful but not necessarily prolonged study. 150 battalions of 1,000 men each should certainly be obtained from this source and woven into our scheme for maintaining the Western front and the efficiency of our armies next year.

10. I have already drawn attention to the extraordinary increase in the standards of home defence against invasion which has taken place since the early periods of the war. The continental military crisis now is as intense as it was in the days of the Marne and the Yser. There is no reason to assume that invasion is less impossible now than it was then. There are in fact a wealth of reasons to the contrary which could easily be stated if desired. It is a fair proposition that, apart from any men taken in the shape of garrison battalions from the troops at home not included in the home defence forces, there should also be at least 50,000 men taken, say, in brigades from the existing home defence forces, and used for holding quiet sectors of the front in France.

The garrison of Ireland requires to be reconsidered from the point of view of the actual work it might have to do ; that is to say, not the conduct of military operations in the ordinary sense but the suppression of sporadic disorders and local rebellions. Armoured motor-cars, machine-gun cyclists, the older pattern of aeroplanes, and a few tanks for street fighting seem to be features which require special development. It is for consideration whether 10,000 serviceable men could not be found from this source for service in ordinary or in garrison battalions abroad.

The total available from the military forces in Great Britain and Ireland should not be estimated at less than 210,000 men.

11. Mechanical engines afford an important means of multiplying man-power. The tanks have proved themselves in appropriate circumstances not only to be a substitute for bombardment but an indispensable adjunct to infantry. In the attack in Flanders we gained 54 square miles with an expenditure of 465,000 tons of ammunition costing 84,000,000l.,



and probably over 300,000 casualties. The offensive at Cambrai, depending as it did entirely upon the surprise use of tanks on a large scale, gained 42 square miles with an expenditure of 36,000 tons of shell, costing 6,600,000*l.* and with a loss of life which, had the operation been confined to its early and fruitful stage, would have not exceeded 10,000 casualties.<sup>1</sup>

There is much to be said in modification of crude figures and comparisons of this kind. But when everything has been said the conclusion presented is overwhelming.

Powerful as the tanks have proved themselves in surprise offensives on suitable ground, they are still more valuable in counter-attack. In this case they would be moving over ground with which they were familiar, and against an enemy necessarily unprepared with any special arrangements to receive them. They are immune from panic, and in their advance must carry forward with them the infantry counter-attack. It would be lamentable if, for want of men at this stage of the war, and with its lessons so cruelly written, we should not be allowed to develop these weapons to our highest manufacturing capacity. Are we really to keep in being, at a time when every man is precious, when every ton of stores counts, 30,000 or 40,000 cavalry with their horses, when these admirable cavalrymen would supply the personnel for the greatest development of mechanical warfare both for offence and defence in tanks, in armoured cars, and on motor-cycles that has ever yet been conceived? . . .

12. To sum up, the following proposals are put forward as a basis for examination. Sir Auckland Geddes' figures show that without recourse to fresh legislation there is a deficit on existing naval and military demands of approximately 645,000 men. It is suggested that this should be met as follows:—

(a) Reduction of monthly wastage through the adoption of an active defensive in the place of the continuous offensive of this year. Six months at 30,000 a month instead of 50,000 . . . . .	= 120,000
(b) The Navy 'living on its own' and through American resources. Reduced demand . . . . .	= 90,000
(c) Munitions and shipbuilding (no diminution in total shipbuilding) . . . . .	= 100,000
(d) Garrison battalions of soldiers serving at home . . . . .	= 150,000
(e) Garrison or sedentary brigades or divisions from home defence and Ireland . . . . .	= 60,000
(f) Coal-mines, agriculture, railways, and balance of men as proposed by Sir Auckland Geddes . . . . .	80,000
Total . . . . .	= 600,000

<sup>1</sup> It was actually much less.

13. It is worth while considering other resources of manpower to which we should look, not merely as alternatives but as supplements and additions, viz.:—

- (a) Raising the age to 50, as has long been done in Germany, Austria, and France (apart from larger numbers available for defensive units) . . . . . 110,000
- (b) Extending compulsion to Ireland . . . . . 200,000
- (c) American troops training, first in platoons, then in companies, and next in battalions, with the British army (200 battalions) . . . . . 200,000
- (d) Developments of mechanical warfare and lateral mobility multiply men but cannot be numerically appraised.

14. It is clear that with these extensive and varied resources at our disposal, we have the means of meeting the prime need of the situation, viz.: to meet the Spring campaign with the British army stronger in every respect than any we have previously put in the field; all its units full; a large proportion of divisions resting and training, thus giving us a strategic reserve, in the Prime Minister's phrase 'an Army of Manœuvre'; an unprecedented development of mechanical and aeronautical warfare; and very large labour forces for defensive works, communications, and services behind the line. This can certainly be done if action is taken now in the same spirit as it would be undoubtedly taken and has in most cases been already taken by the enemy with whom we are fighting. Moreover, it can be done without interfering in any serious degree with our war against the submarines, with our defence against invasion, or with our production of munitions.

Nearly all these specific measures, which were at this time contrary to the views of the War Cabinet, were taken or resolved on after the catastrophe of March 21. Taken in January, they would have prevented it.

I also made, under all proper guard, a speech at Bedford on December 11 in the same sense.

'Two months ago I stated in London that the war was entering upon its sternest phase, but I must admit that the situation at this moment is more serious than it was reasonable two months ago to expect. The country is in danger as it has not been since the battle of the Marne saved Paris, and the battles of Ypres and of the Yser saved the Channel ports. The cause of the Allies is now in danger. The future of the British Empire, and of democracy, and of civilization hang, and will continue to hang for a considerable period, in a balance and an anxious suspense. It is impossible, even if it were desirable, to conceal these facts from our enemies. It would be folly not to face them boldly ourselves. . . .

'Anyone can see for himself what has happened in Russia. Russia has been thoroughly beaten by the Germans. Her great heart has been broken, not only by German might, but by German intrigue; not only by German steel, but by German gold. Russia has fallen on the ground prostrate in exhaustion and in agony. No one can tell what fearful vicissitudes will come to Russia, or how or when she will arise, but arise she will. It is this melancholy event which has prolonged the war, that has robbed the French, the British and the Italian armies of the prize that was perhaps almost within their reach this summer; it is this event, and this event alone, that has exposed us to perils and sorrows and sufferings which we have not deserved, which we cannot avoid, but under which we shall not bend.

'There never was a moment in this war when the practical steps which we ought to take showed themselves more plainly, or when the choice presented to us was so brutally clear as it is to-night, or when there was less excuse for patriotic men to make the mistake of being misled by sophistries and dangerous counsels. . . .

'What is the one great practical step we must take without a day's delay? We must raise the strength of our army to its highest point. A heavier strain will be thrown upon this army than it has ever had to bear before. We must see that it is stronger than it has ever been before. Do not put too heavy a burden on those heroic men by whose valiant efforts we exist from day to day. Husband their lives, conserve and accumulate their force. Every division of our army must be raised to full strength; every service—the most scientific, the most complex—must be thoroughly provided; we must make sure that in the months to come a large proportion of our army is resting, refreshing, and training behind the front line ready to spring like leopards upon the German hordes. Masses of guns, mountains of shells, clouds of aeroplanes—all must be ready, all must be there; we have only to act together, and we have only to act at once.'

These official or public arguments were reinforced by the strongest personal appeals. Nothing however had the slightest effect. The Prime Minister and his colleagues in the War Cabinet were adamant. Their policy was not decided without full deliberation. They were definitely opposed to any renewal of the British offensive in France. They wished the British and French armies to observe during 1918 a holding and defensive attitude. They wished to keep a tight control over their remaining man-power until the arrival of the American millions

offered the prospect of decisive success. In the meanwhile action in Palestine, with forces almost inappreciable in the scale of the Western Front, might drive Turkey out of the war, and cheer the public mind during a long and grievous vigil. They were fully informed of the growing German concentration against Haig, and repeatedly discussed it. But they believed that the Germans if they attacked would encounter the same difficulties as had so long baffled us, and that our armies were amply strong enough for defence. Haig was accordingly left to face the spring with an army whose 56 infantry divisions were reduced from a thirteen to a ten-battalion basis,<sup>1</sup> and with three instead of five cavalry divisions,<sup>2</sup> which in the absence of alternative methods were at last to render valuable service.

But this was not the end of his trials. The French, also living in a world of illusions, now came forward with a vehement demand that the British should take over a larger part of the front. A cursory glance at the map shows that the French with 100 divisions comprising 700,000 rifles held 480 kilometres of front, whereas 56 British divisions comprising 504,000 rifles only held 200 kilometres. In other words, the British with more than two-thirds of the French rifle strength held less than one-third of the front. But this was a very superficial test. Large portions of the French front were in continual quiescence, and the weak railway communications opposite them excluded the possibility of a serious hostile offensive. The British, on the other hand, held nearly all the most active front, and had opposite to them, even in January, a larger proportion of German divisions than were marshalled against the French Army. Against the long French front were arrayed 79 German divisions, while no fewer than 69 stood before the short British sector. Moreover, the German concentration against the British front was growing week by week, and it was already extremely probable that the first and main thrust would be delivered upon them. Further, the French had not fought a heavy battle since April and May, 1917, while the British Army had maintained an almost continuous offensive, suffering, as we have seen, calamitous losses. Finally, the French soldier enjoyed nearly three times as much leave to visit his home as his British comrade; that is to say, there were in proportion three times as many French rifles absent from the line at any given moment as there were British.

Under pressure both from the French and the British Governments, Haig had agreed in December to extend his front by fourteen miles as far south as Barisis; and this relief was effected

<sup>1</sup> Or from twelve to nine, if the Pioneer Battalion is excluded.

<sup>2</sup> Two Indian cavalry divisions were sent from France to Palestine.

in February. A further demand by the French that the British front should be extended to Berry-au-Bac thirty miles farther south-east, though backed with the threatened resignation of Monsieur Clémenceau, was successfully resisted under a similar threat by the British Commander-in-Chief.

The continued friction and want of confidence between Sir William Robertson and Mr. Lloyd George came to a head at the beginning of February. The Prime Minister was moving cautiously but tirelessly towards the conception of a unified command. He did not yet feel strong enough to disclose his purpose. A proposal which obviously involved placing the British armies under a French Commander was one which he judged as yet beyond his strength to carry. It was a hazardous issue on which to challenge the joint resignations both of Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig. It is probable that the War Cabinet would not have been united in its support; and that the Liberal opposition would have been unanimous against it. The Prime Minister had therefore so far suspended his wishes that speaking of an independent generalissimo he told the House of Commons in November: 'I am utterly opposed to that suggestion. It would not work. It would produce real friction, and might produce not merely friction between the armies, but friction between the nations and the Governments.'

Nevertheless, Mr. Lloyd George continued by a series of extremely laborious and mystifying manœuvres to move steadily forward towards his solution. On January 30, at the meeting of the Supreme War Council at Versailles, he secured a decision to create a general reserve of thirty divisions and to entrust it to a Committee representing Britain, Italy, the United States and France, with General Foch at its head. This proposal constitutes his answer and that of the War Cabinet to the charge of imprudently lowering the strength of the British Army in France in the face of the growing German concentration. There is no doubt that had this plan been put immediately into execution, and had Foch been armed with thirty divisions specifically assigned to the support of whatever part of the front was attacked, larger resources would have been secured to Haig in his approaching hour of supreme need. Haig did not however welcome the proposal. He declared that he had no divisions to spare for the general reserve, and that there were not even enough for the various army fronts. In such circumstances the earmarking of particular British divisions for service elsewhere could have been little more than a formality. None could have been taken from him unless the attack fell elsewhere.

The decision, like many others of the Supreme War Council, remained a dead letter; and events moved forward without the

British Army receiving either the reinforcements for which Haig had pleaded or the reserves which Lloyd George had laboured to supply.

Although the thirty divisions were lacking, the Executive Committee to control them at Versailles was created. Sir William Robertson claimed that he, as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, should alone represent Great Britain upon it. This raised an issue upon which the Prime Minister felt himself strong enough to engage. He declared it a matter of fundamental principle that the two posts could not be held by one man. It was his undoubted intention to arm the Cabinet with an alternative set of military advisers whose opinions could be used to curb and correct the Robertson-Haig view, and so prevent a repetition of offensives like Passchendaele. No doubt he would also have used the new body to promote schemes of war outside the Western Front. The arrangement was indefensible in principle, but in the aftermath of Passchendaele its objects were worthy. Into the complications of the dispute and its manoeuvres it is not necessary to enter here. On February 11, Robertson, returning to London, which he had somewhat imprudently quitted for a few days, was confronted by the Secretary of State for War with a note signed on February 9 by the Prime Minister. This reduced the functions of the C.I.G.S. to the limits which had existed before the Kitchener breakdown, and it prescribed the independent functions of the British Military Representative on the Versailles Committee. Thirdly, it nominated Sir William Robertson Military Representative, and Sir Henry Wilson Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Robertson, astonished at his supersession, declined the appointment to Versailles on the ground that the arrangement was unsound. The post of C.I.G.S., although originally designed for Wilson, was then incontinently offered to Sir Herbert Plumer, who with equal promptitude refused it. Finally, it was offered again to Robertson on the reduced basis of the Prime Minister's Note. On February 16 Robertson recorded his refusal to agree to the conditions prescribed, and that same evening the Official Press Bureau announced that the Government had 'accepted his resignation.' He had in fact been dismissed. Lord Derby, who did his best to compose the differences, also proffered his resignation, which was not accepted.

The principles of military duty on which Sir Douglas Haig invariably proceeded prevented him, even at this time of tension with the Government, from adding his own resignation to the dismissal of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. On questions which in his view involved the safety of the British Armies under his command, Sir Douglas Haig—right or wrong—was, whenever necessary, ready to resign. But these constituted the sole excep-

tions which he allowed himself to make in his obedience. Had any motive of personal intrigue been present in his mind, the crisis between the High Command and the Civil Power would have been gravely aggravated. The position of the Government at this time was strong and the issue one on which they could rely on public support. The Prime Minister did not flinch. Nevertheless Haig's retention, without comment, of his post was received with relief by the anxious War Cabinet; and Sir Henry Wilson was speedily appointed to the vacant chair in Whitehall.

It would certainly not be just to assume in these transactions that any of the parties were influenced otherwise than by public duty. But beneath the bald record of events the clash is plain. Both the Prime Minister and Sir William Robertson were in deadly earnest, both measured forces, and both knew the risks they ran. It was impossible for the two men to work together any longer. The situation at the centre of power had become intolerable. Action was long overdue. It was a pity it could not have taken a simpler form.

Sir William Robertson was an outstanding military personality. His vision as a strategist was not profound, but his outlook was clear, well-drilled and practical. During his tenure he had reintroduced orderly methods of dealing with War Office problems, and had revived the General Staff system. He had no ideas of his own, but a sensible judgment negative in bias. He represented professional formalism expressed in the plainest terms. He held a conception of war policy wholly opposed to the views set out in these volumes, but honestly and consistently maintained. I was glad, as Secretary of State for War, when after the victory he eventually retired from the Army, to submit a recommendation to the King which enabled his long and honourable career from the rank of a private soldier to end with the baton of a Field-Marshal.

In the stresses of this internal disturbance I took no part. I was on the front during the whole week busily occupied, and it was only on my return that I learned the inner facts from various actors in the drama. The view which I took of my own work made it necessary for me to keep continually in touch with the actual conditions of the fighting line. The Commander-in-Chief accorded me the fullest liberty of movement in the British zone, and placed every facility at my disposal. I was most anxious to understand by personal observation the latest methods of holding the line which were involved in the preparations for a great defensive battle. I stayed with General Lipsett, commanding the 3rd Canadian Division, and under his deeply instructed guidance examined

minutely from front to rear the whole of the sector which he occupied opposite to Lens.

Very different was the state of the line from what I had known it to be when serving with the Guards in 1915 or as a Battalion Commander in 1916. The system of continuous trenches with their barbed-wire networks, their parapets, firing-steps, traverses and dugouts, the first line of which was manned in great strength and often constituted the strongest line of resistance, had vanished. Contact with the enemy was maintained only by a fringe of outposts, some of which were fortified, while others trusted merely to concealment. Behind these over a distance of two or three thousand yards were sited intricate systems of machine-gun nests, nearly all operating by flank fire and mutually supporting each other. Slender communication trenches enabled these to be approached and relieved by night. The barbed-wire networks, instead of being drawn laterally in a continuous belt across the front, lay obliquely with intervals so as to draw the attackers into avenues mercilessly swept by machine-gun fire. Open spaces between important points were reserved for the full fury of the protecting barrages. This was the Battle Zone. Two thousand yards or so farther in the rear were the field battery positions. Strong works to which the long disused word 'redoubt' was applied, and deep grids of trenches and deeper dugouts elaborately camouflaged, provided for the assembling and maintenance of the supporting troops. Behind these again in modest and obscure recesses lay the Brigade Headquarters; behind which again the groups of heavy and medium batteries were disposed in studied irregular array. Favoured by beautiful weather and a quiet day, we were able by taking care to make our way into the ruins of Avion village, in which in twos and threes the keen-eyed Canadian sharpshooters maintained their ceaseless bickering against the German outposts fifty or a hundred yards away.

I must frankly admit that all that I saw, both in the line and of the minutely perfected organization far to the rear, inspired me with confidence in the strength of the defensive system which had gradually developed as the war proceeded. Holding the convictions which this volume describes of the relative power of offence and defence under modern conditions, I looked forward, at least so far as this sector was concerned, to the day when the Germans would taste a measure of that bitter draught our armies had been made to drink so long. Alas, the conditions here were by no means representative of the general state of the line.

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It is no disparagement of the qualities of Sir William Robertson to record the very great pleasure with which I learned of the



appointment of Sir Henry Wilson to be Chief of the Staff. We had known each other for many years. I had met him first by the banks of the Tugela in February, 1900, and my first picture of him is a haggard but jocular Major emerging from a bloody night's work in the Pieter's Hill fighting. It was in discussion with him from 1910 onwards that I had studied the problem of a war between France and Germany. Though I recorded at the time somewhat different conclusions about the opening phase from those on which he proceeded, my debt to him was very great. Never shall I forget the memorable forecast which in August, 1911, during the Agadir crisis, he had given to the Committee of Imperial Defence. At this period we were close confederates. The crisis passed away, and the Irish quarrel sundered our personal relations. A devoted son of Ulster, he resented with a passion which knew no bounds the Home Rule policy of the Liberal Government. During the intense days which preceded the British declaration of war upon Germany we were forced to meet on several occasions, but on a purely official basis. The mobilization of the Fleet and the final decision to join France, in which I had played my part, carried all before them in Wilson's heart. But this I did not know, and it was with surprise that one August morning I received at the Admiralty a visit of ceremony from him on the eve of his departure for France. He had come to say that all past differences were obliterated and that we were friends again. He was opposed later on to the Dardanelles expedition. At that time he saw the War only in the light of the struggle in France. Had he commanded the central point of view, he would perhaps have had a different opinion. At any rate his policy as Chief of the Staff was far wider in its scope than the Western Front. But these disagreements did not, so far as I am aware, impair our personal relations; and when later on I served in France as a Battalion Commander, he showed me every courtesy and often discussed the whole situation, military and political, with the freedom we had practised at Whitehall in days when my position was superior. His appointment as Chief of the Staff led immediately to the closest harmony between the spheres of Strategy and Material. The conceptions of war which I held, and which these pages record, received from him a keen and pregnant welcome. Almost his first act was to raise the War Office demand for the Tank Corps from 18,000 to 46,000 men.

In Sir Henry Wilson the War Cabinet found for the first time an expert adviser of superior intellect, who could explain lucidly and forcefully the whole situation and give reasons for the adoption or rejection of any course. Such gifts are, whether rightly or wrongly, the object of habitual distrust in England. But they

are certainly a very great comfort in the transaction of public business. Sir Henry Wilson constantly corrected the clarity of his mind by whimsical mannerisms and modes of expression. He spoke in parables, used curious images and cryptic phrases. He had a vocabulary of his own. The politicians were 'frocks'; Clémenceau, always the 'Tiger.' He even addressed him as Tiger. His faithful Aide-de-Camp, Duncannon, was 'the Lord.' He wantonly pronounced grotesquely the names of French towns and Generals. In discussing the gravest matters he used the modes of levity. 'Prime Minister,' he began one day to the War Cabinet, at a meeting which I attended, 'to-day I am Boche.' Then followed a penetrating description of the situation from the standpoint of the German Headquarters. On another day he would be France or Bulgaria, and always out of this affectation there emerged, to my mind, the root of the matter in hand. But some Ministers were irritated. He did not go so far as Marshal Foch, who sometimes gave a military description in pantomime; but their methods of displaying a war proposition had much in common.

I can see him so clearly as I write, standing before the map in the Cabinet Room giving one of his terse telegraphese appreciations. 'This morning, Sir, a new battle.' (The reader will recognize it when it comes.) 'This time it is we who have attacked. We have attacked with two armies—one British, one French. Sir Haig is in his train, Prime Minister, very uncomfortable, near the good city of Amiens. And Rawly<sup>1</sup> is in his left hand and Debeney is in his right. Rawly is using five hundred tanks. It is a big battle, and we thought you would not like us to tell you about it beforehand.' I cannot vouch for the actual words, but this was the sense and manner of it.

We should be thankful that the future is veiled. I was to be present at another scene in this room. There was no Henry Wilson. The Prime Minister and I faced each other, and on the table between us lay the pistols which an hour before had drunk this loyal man's blood.

I have strayed alike from narrative and chronology to make in deep respect this reference to the most comprehending military mind of our day in Britain and to a soldier who, although he commanded no armies, exerted on occasion a profound and fortunate influence over the greatest events.

With Sir Henry Wilson, as his deputy, came the brilliant Harington, who at Plumer's side had won for the Second Army its unequalled reputation. I think I may say that in all that concerned the making of the weapons for a campaign in 1919, with their inevitable profound reactions upon its plans, we thought as

<sup>1</sup> General Rawlinson.

one. He supported me in all my principal projects for the supply of the armies, and used, under Sir Henry Wilson, the whole power of the General Staff to carry forward the plans for the great mechanical battle which we trusted, however late in the day, would bring finality.

I had also in the War Office at this time a friend in General Furse, the Master-General of the Ordnance. He had commanded the Division in which I had served during the few months I was at the front, and we had many times argued out the kind of projects I was now in a position to put forward. To ensure the closest contact in the vast Artillery sphere I appointed him with Lord Milner's approval<sup>1</sup> to be an actual member of the Munitions Council. Thus all these far-reaching and, though subordinate, yet vital controls pulled together from this time forward, and we had to worry only about the enemy.

In this favourable atmosphere at the beginning of March I completed a general survey of the War ostensibly from the Munitions standpoint, and unfolded the argument for the mechanical battle.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*March 5, 1918.*

### MUNITIONS PROGRAMME, 1919

1. So far as munitions are concerned, the year 1918 is settled for good or for ill. No decisive changes in our modes of warfare can be produced in time to influence the campaign now opening. But it is imperative to decide quite soon what the character of the campaign of 1919 is to be. It is no use considering such a question in October or November. Practically a whole year's notice is required for any great development in material. We ought to have made up our minds by the beginning of April what the main principles and general outlines of our munitions programme for 1919 are to be. I would ask that this task may be undertaken at once.

2. We are immediately confronted with the fundamental question 'How are we going to win the war in 1919?' It seems to me a reasonable expectation, if every effort is made and unity prevails, that by the end of this year we shall have established three very substantial facts which are now disputed: (i) either the German will have attacked in the West and have been repulsed, or he will have exposed himself incapable of delivering an offensive on a great scale. (ii) the submarine warfare will have entered upon a phase in which our tonnage will be greater at the end of every month, and not less as at

<sup>1</sup> Lord Milner had now succeeded Lord Derby at the War Office.

present ; (iii) the growing American army will be becoming a real and great military factor. It is possible we may add a (iv) to this, viz., a definite and unmistakable ascendancy in the air both as regards numbers and quality. All these aims have of course to be fought for and worked for during the ensuing months. They are reasonable objects of endeavour. Failure to attain any of them would be disastrous to us. Our success, on the other hand, in attaining all of them will not necessarily be fatal to the enemy.

3. (a) We must further assume that a new front will be made against the enemy in the East by Japanese armies being brought as deeply as possible into Russia, and by every conceivable inducement being offered to Japan to come directly into collision and contact with the German forces. It will further be necessary to stop the spread of German influence towards India through Persia. This can only be done by sending without delay sufficient troops to dominate the Persian situation, as was done by the Grand Duke in 1915 with such successful results. (b) We must assume that while Germany is absorbing and dragooning Russia, Great Britain will continue to break up and devour Turkey as an offset, albeit unequal. (c) We may balance the chances of an internal collapse in Italy against those of an internal collapse in Austria, it being assumed however that we shall do as much to help Italy as Germany has done since the beginning of the war for her allies.

4. All these perilous matters being accomplished will bring us to the campaign of 1919, and if we get so far the question repeats itself, 'How are we going to win then?' If there is no method of winning then which military men can discover, it will certainly be argued by many that it would be better to make peace at the least unfavourable moment in the present year, abandoning altogether the hope of a decisive victory in the war. It therefore becomes of the very highest consequence to discover what is the best plan for 1919, and whether there is any plan or use we can make of our resources which will give us a reasonable hope of a military victory.

5. It is clear that a military victory (apart from internal collapse) can only be reached by offensive action, and that offensive action can only be based on overwhelming superiority in one form or another. Even if all the favourable assumptions made in the earlier paragraphs of this paper are borne out, it is clear that no overwhelming superiority will be available for us in several of the main elements of war. For instance, we cannot expect any sufficient preponderance in man-power in 1919, even with the American armies, to enable

us to overwhelm by numbers the German front in the West. The best it is reasonable to hope is that the two sides will be of about the same relative strength as in 1917 before the Russian collapse. Even this is highly disputable. On the other hand, we may fairly reckon on a good superiority in quality, which, added to the improvement in numbers, will give us once again in the West undoubtedly the stronger armies. Still, the margin will not be enough to offer any prospect of a military victory by man-power.

6. There does not either seem to be any good prospect of winning a military victory through an overwhelming superiority in guns and shells. We are already at the limit of our shell production. We cannot expect that the tonnage of 1919 will at the very best do more than enable us, having regard to our depleting stocks, to maintain our 1918 standards. These give us no marked superiority over the enemy. Further, the limits of what can be effected by gun power have been coming very clearly into view. We see that after a certain point it tends to defeat its own purposes as an offensive weapon, for the ground is so ploughed up by the necessary artillery preparation that it is impossible for troops to advance over it. It is a very practical and pregnant question at the moment whether artillery has not been overdone, and whether in the disposition of our resources for 1919 both personnel and material should not be liberated from artillery for other forms of warfare. I will return to this later.

7. Again, it is clear that our policy of blockade on which the Navy have hitherto relied can no longer be counted upon to produce decisive results now that the Germans have got enormous portions of Russia at their disposal. Indeed we are likely during the period under survey to suffer nearly as much inconvenience and political instability through lack of supplies as are our enemies.

I therefore return to the fundamental question. If you cannot starve out your enemy, if you cannot bear him down by numbers or blast him from your path with artillery, how are you going to win?

8. I wish to avow however at this stage in the argument a firm conviction that the method and the means do exist by which in 1919 the German armies in the West could be decisively defeated and their front effectively broken up. No proposition of this kind can be stated in terms of certainty, because there are no certainties in war; but I believe that if the right decisions are taken now, it should be possible to impart to the British armies in particular, and to the Allied armies in general, *a means of continuous*

*forward progression* in 1919 which if successful would yield decisive results, and that the chances of success are good enough to justify the prolongation of the struggle in the meanwhile. I will proceed to indicate in general terms the lines of thought to which attention should be directed in order to realize the result.

## II

9. Wars have hitherto been conducted by infantry, cavalry and artillery, and these are the three recognized arms of the service. It has also been observed with some truth that 'the infantry is the army, and uses the other arms as its adjuncts.' Whichever way the question is viewed, it is clear that there are no means of obtaining an overwhelming superiority sufficient to enable a continuous advance to be made by any developments which it is in our power to make in the infantry, cavalry, and artillery in 1919. However, in the present war at least four new arms of the highest consequence have come into being, viz.:—

Acroplanes,  
Tanks,  
Gas, and  
Machine guns.

If we are to obtain the necessary superiority and the means of effective progression against the enemy, it can only be by developments of a far-reaching character in these new methods of warfare.

10. And let it here be observed that every one of these four new arms has already played or shown itself capable of playing a decisive part in the present war, in spite of the fact that they have only been tardily and partially and doubtfully developed. For instance, it is the machine gun which has made the defensive hitherto invincible. Again, if either side possessed the power to drop not five tons but five hundred tons of bombs each night on the cities and manufacturing establishments of its opponent, the result would be decisive. If the Germans had used poison gas on a sufficiently large scale the first time they used it at all and before we were provided with effective masks, they could undoubtedly have broken up our whole front in the West. Similarly, if we had developed tanks in secret or at any rate in mystery till we had about 2,000, and then had used them as they were used at the battle of Cambrai, only on a much larger scale and with carefully husbanded reserves of infantry to follow them up,

we in turn might have broken up the German front and driven their armies into a continuous retreat. We are clearly in the presence of new factors, all of which possess decisive qualities.

11. It must however be remembered that the total quantity of our resources is limited, and that the decision which has to be taken is one which involves the development of these new arms, both in men and material, to a very large extent at the expense of the old. Still, it is contended that this should be boldly faced, that we should create in order to attack the enemy in 1919 an army essentially different in its composition and methods of warfare from any that have yet been employed on either side. This would only be in accordance with the obvious principle that if you cannot get a sufficient superiority over your opponent in the same methods as he employs, you should break away and develop different and unexpected variants. Thus we may contemplate (a) relieving the want of man-power in the infantry, especially on defensive sectors of the front, by great increases of machine guns, automatic rifles, and the like ; or (b) putting most of the cavalry into tanks or other mechanical vehicles ; or (c) drawing upon the artillery and the material which supplies it, as far as may be needed, to raise chemical warfare to its proper proportionate position in our organization. It is unnecessary to speak of the air, for that is already accepted. We have undoubtedly the power at the present time of making such decisions fully effective for 1919 if we act without delay and upon a carefully thought out and ruthlessly pursued plan. The question is essentially one of proportion, but it is not capable of being solved unless the old proportions are definitely put aside and revolutionary changes in the composition of the armies and in their methods of warfare are unhesitatingly faced.

12. On the other hand, we need not exaggerate the extent of the changes which would be necessary. Let us assume—the figures are of course only tokens—that at the present time our military effort in men and material combined is expressed as follows:—

Infantry, 40 per cent.  
Artillery, 40 per cent. ,  
Air, 10 per cent.  
Cavalry,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.  
Machine Guns, 4 per cent.  
Tanks, 2 per cent.  
Gas,  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

The kind of change that is suggested might be expressed as follows:—

Infantry, 35 per cent.  
 Artillery, 30 per cent.  
 Air, 15 per cent.  
 Cavalry,  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.  
 Machine Guns, 7 per cent.  
 Tanks, 8 per cent.  
 Gas,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

This would give us an army substantially different in its composition from that of its opponents, and capable of confronting him with offensive propositions fundamentally different in character from those which he has hitherto disposed of.

As stated above, the Air expansion is already practically conceded. The development of machine guns and automatic rifles is also to a great extent assured; but the two most vital of the new arms, namely tanks and gas, are at present only used on a miniature and experimental scale.

13. Yet in both of these we have immense advantages, inherent or acquired, over the enemy. Incomparably the most effective method of discharging gas is by liberating it from cylinders to form a gas cloud when the wind is favourable. In no other way can results on the largest scale be achieved. Although for some time we and the Germans have relied instead upon firing gas shells from guns or mortars, there is no doubt that the original method in spite of its difficulty and danger is by far the most formidable. It is undoubtedly possible if the wind is favourable to discharge gas over a wide front which, if the discharge is sufficiently prolonged or intense, will render all existing masks ineffectual. The supreme fact is that the wind is at least six times, and some say nine times, as favourable to us as it is to the enemy. We are mad not to avail ourselves of this overwhelming advantage. But with our present pitifully small gas service of perhaps 6,000 or 7,000 men we are only trifling with the problem.

14. Again, take tanks. Here our advantage is due to our having started far in advance of the enemy and having with painful slowness but extreme thoroughness explored the difficulties, tactical and manufacturing, of this highly complicated arm. The element of novelty has now been thrown away, but numbers, quality, organization, and training still afford us opportunities of the first order if we only had the wisdom and resolution to profit by them. The year 1919 is



still at our disposal. It is undoubtedly within our power to construct in very large numbers armoured vehicles of various types, some to fight, some to pursue, some to cut wire and trample trenches, some to carry forward men or machine-gun parties, or artillery, or supplies, to such an extent and on such a scale that 150,000 to 200,000 fighting men can be carried forward certainly and irresistibly on a broad front and to a depth of 8 or 10 miles in the course of a single day. The resources are available, the knowledge is available, the time is available, the result is certain: nothing is lacking except the will. We have never been able to get out of the rut of traditional and conventional methods. We have never been able to plan on a sufficiently large scale, long in advance, and with the necessary force and authority to drive the policy through. We have instead only carried out a series of costly experiments each of which has shown us the chance we have lost and exposed our thought to the enemy.

15. It surely lies with those who shake their heads to say on what alternative method of attack or on what alternative form of superiority they can rely to win a military victory in 1919. Where are they going to get the numerical superiority which they had in the autumn of 1916 and the spring of 1917, and which was then found not to be sufficient? What more can artillery do in offence than it has already done in the great battles of this year and last? What grounds are there for supposing that we possess more staying power or more national discipline than the Germans? What more is to be looked for from the blockade? If there is an alternative plan let us have it. If not, let this one have its fair chance. Let it be backed with as good an effort as was given to the creation of the British artillery in 1915 and 1916. Let other interests be made to concede and conform to its essential requirements. Surely we ought to have a plan for which we can strive, and not simply go carrying on from day to day and from hand to mouth in the hopes of something turning up before we reach the final abyss of general anarchy and world famine.

16. There is a short way of ending this war: it is to defeat the German armies in the West. For this purpose two conditions are necessary: first, we must have stronger and better armies ourselves: that is the foundation on which everything rests, and there is no reason why we should not have it in 1919. Secondly, we must discover a method of the offensive which enables these stronger armies to advance at a certain moderate rate of progression along their selected strategical lines. The problem is therefore definite and

precise. Indeed it is mainly mechanical. Discover a method by which a stronger army can regain its rightful power of continuous advance, and decisive victory is won. It is mechanical methods which are preventing that advance. Overcome these by mechanical agency, and courage and quality will once again receive their due.

### III

17. There is one other aspect of the problem to which I referred in my paper of the 21st October last, namely the scale and intensity of a decisive conflict. War between equals in power is not an affair which can be carried to a result merely by quasi business and administrative processes flowing smoothly out month after month and year after year. It should be a succession of climaxes on which everything is staked, toward which everything tends, and from which permanent decisions are obtained. These climaxes have usually been called battles. A battle means that the whole resources on either side that can be brought to bear are during the course of a single episode concentrated upon the enemy. There has not been a battle in this war since the battle of the Marne of which this could be said. We in England particularly are misled by the increasing scale of our casualties, due to the increasing size of our armies, into thinking that the intensity of the conflict is greater now than in the opening stages of the war. The battle of the Somme in the period of its greatest fury involved no more than the engagement simultaneously of about twenty British and French divisions against probably half that number of Germans; and the battle of Verdun ceased when the battle of the Somme had begun. All the great operations of 1916 and 1917, although so prolonged as to cause very heavy losses, have involved the simultaneous employment only of comparatively small forces on comparatively small fronts. The armies have been fighting in instalments; they have engaged perhaps 8 or 10 per cent. of their total strength.

18. The reasons which have led to this are well known. The power of the defensive is such that practically the whole spare artillery of an army has to be collected to support a single attack in which there is no room for more than a tenth of the available troops. There has never been, and there will never be, enough artillery to enable, say, six battles of Messines to be fought at one and the same moment. And thus the war in the West has dwindled down to siege operations on a gigantic scale which however bloody and

prolonged cannot yield a decisive result. Thus, when a great battle is raging on the British front, six or eight British divisions are fighting desperately, half a dozen others are waiting to sustain them, the rest of the front is calm; twenty British divisions are remaining quietly in their trenches doing their daily routine, another twenty are training behind the lines; 20,000 men are at school, 10,000 are playing football, 100,000 are on leave. It is the same with the enemy. Obviously we have passed out of the region where the scale and intensity of the operations can be decisive on the great armies which are in presence of each other. Still less can they be decisive on the great belligerent nations. The idea of ending the war by 'killing Germans' is a delusion. You have got to kill or totally incapacitate at least 700,000 Germans in every year, *i.e.*, a number equal to the annual increment, before the slightest progress is made towards wearing down their manhood. And it takes at least one man's life to kill a German. We have to be, in short, merely exchanging lives, and exchanging lives upon a scale at once more frightful than anything that has been witnessed before in the world, and too modest to produce a decision.

19. Contrast this with the first two shocks of the war in the West, namely the first collision on the frontiers or the supreme struggle at the Marne. In the first three weeks of the war, between the 20th August and the 10th or 12th September, the whole of the French and German armies, every division, every available man, were simultaneously, continuously, or repeatedly engaged in open and moving warfare. The battle of the Marne for instance comprised not only those operations near Paris of which we have read, but a general battle on a front beginning 50 kilometres west of Paris right up to Verdun, and then round the corner far down past Nancy into Alsace, a total of certainly not less than 350 kilometres, along the whole of which the armies were at death grips, hurling their last reserves at each other. The French, although ultimately victorious, lost more men in the first twenty days of fighting than in the whole of the year 1917. The *tempo* of the war has progressively languished. It has steadily declined into a deadlock more perilous and more agonizing, more disintegrating in its effects upon the world, than any decision of armies, however sharp.

20. Until the arrival of the Americans in force, that is to say during the whole of this year, we are not in a position without running a desperate risk, to seek a general battle; but next year, in 1919, we may again be unmistakably superior in strength. It will then be right to fight a battle; that

is to say to seek a military decision for which the whole strength of the armies is employed—every man, every gun, every resource—within an exceedingly limited number of days. But how? By what means can we overcome the physical and mechanical difficulties that have hitherto imposed such severe limitations on our actions? Possibly three times as many men as the enemy would be one way: we shall never have them. Three or four times as much artillery as we have at present might be another way: we shall never get it. There only remain these novel methods, good in themselves, better still in combination with the older methods. If on the British front we can only afford the concentrated artillery necessary to sustain say two great simultaneous attacks, and the French an equal number, must we not look for substitutes which will enable other attacks, supported only by the local artillery, to be delivered at the same time? Gas will certainly give you one of these. Tanks, if we develop them, could give us at least two of the highest order. Possibly trench mortars might offer another means. If the French and American armies followed similar methods, there is no reason why we should not once more see a general battle on a 300-kilometre front, applying in its brief course the whole strength of our stronger attacking armies, and yet with each attack supported by some scientific method which overcame the wire and machine guns of the defence.

That would be war proceeding by design through crisis to decision—not mere waste and slaughter sagging slowly downwards into general collapse.

The fury of the storm was now about to break upon us, and these arguments were soon to be illustrated and corrected by flaming events. Ludendorff, reintroducing the great Battle period and consuming the German strength in desperate offensives without the necessary mechanical weapons and vehicles, was destined to bring about the Allied 'general battle on a 300-kilometre front' which ended the war; and to bring it about after periods of awful peril one year earlier than our best plans could have achieved.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TWENTY-FIRST OF MARCH

The German Peace Opportunity—Ludendorff's Power—'Michael' and 'Mars'—Hindenburg's Order—At the British Headquarters—The Commander-in-Chief's Anxieties—With the 9th Division—The Barrage Falls—The Scale of the Battle—The First Day—The Battle Zone—Stubborn Resistance of the British Infantry—The Germans cross the Somme—'Mars'—French Assistance—The Last Phase—Ludendorff's Strategic Failure—Where the Blame Lies—In Whitehall—The Doullens Meeting—General Gough—His Supersession—The Munition Workers' Achievement—The Guns Replaced.

AS the Passchendaele struggle died away in the storms and mud of winter, the military rulers of Germany addressed themselves to a new situation. The collapse of Russia had enabled them to transport 1,000,000 men and 3,000 guns from the Eastern to the Western Front. For the first time therefore since the invasion they found themselves possessed of a definite superiority over the Allies in France. But this superiority was fleeting. The United States had declared war and was arming, but had not yet arrived. Once the great masses of American manhood could be trained, equipped, transported and brought into the line of battle, all the numerical advantage Germany had gained from the destruction of Russia would be more than counterbalanced. At the same time the German Main Headquarters knew the grave losses the British Army had suffered at Passchendaele, and felt themselves entitled to count upon a marked decline in its strength and fighting quality. Lastly, the amazing character of the German-Austrian victory over the Italians at Caporetto glittered temptingly.

This was undoubtedly a favourable opportunity for peace negotiations. Russia down, Italy gasping, France exhausted, the British armies bled white, the U-boats not yet defeated, and the United States 3,000 miles away, constituted cumulatively a position where German statesmanship might well have intervened decisively. The immense conquests which Germany had made in Russia, and the hatred and scorn with which the Bolsheviks were regarded by the Allies, might well have made it possible for Germany to make important territorial concessions to France, and to offer Britain the complete restoration of Belgium. The desertion by Soviet Russia of the Allied cause, and the conse-

quent elimination of all Russian claims, created a similar easement in negotiations for both Austria and Turkey. Such were the elements of this great opportunity. It was the last.

But Ludendorff cared for none of these things. We must regard him at this juncture as the dominating will. Since the fall of Bethmann-Hollweg, he and Hindenburg, at the head of the German General Staff machine, had usurped, or at least acquired, the main control over policy. The Emperor, inwardly appalled by the tide of events, suspected of being a pacifist at heart, failed increasingly to play his part. Thus on definite trials of strength the military power proved repeatedly to be predominant. It stood on the specialized basis of military opinion, not capable of measuring justly many of the most important forces which were at work internally and abroad. It was all the more dangerous because it was not complete. Ludendorff and Hindenburg by threatening resignation could obtain the crucial decisions they desired. These decisions governed the fate of Germany. But they were only acquainted with a portion of the problem, and they could only carry out such parts of the indispensable resultant policy as fell within their own military sphere. There was altogether lacking that supreme combination of the King-Warrior-Statesman which is apparent in the persons of the great conquerors of history.

Ludendorff was bent on keeping Courland, Lithuania and Poland in the east. Had his own fame not been gained in these regions? He was also determined to keep a part of Belgium, including Liège, where he had also distinguished himself. This he felt was imperative if the German armies were to obtain a good strategic starting-point for a future war. So far from ceding any portion of Alsace and Lorraine, he and the General Staff regarded the acquisition of a protective zone west of Metz, including the Briey Basin, as a bare measure of prudence. These postulates and the possession of the new armies regathered from the Russian front settled the course of events.

On November 11, 1917, a day in the calendar afterwards celebrated for other reasons, Ludendorff, von Kuhl and von der Schulenberg met at Mons. The nominal masters of these great Staff Officers—Hindenburg, Prince Rupprecht and the Crown Prince—were not troubled to attend. The basis of the conference was that there should be a supreme offensive in the West; that there would only be enough troops for one such offensive without any diversion elsewhere; that the offensive must be made in February or the beginning of March before the Americans could develop their strength; and finally, that it was the British Army which must be beaten. Various alternative schemes were discussed and orders given for their detailed preparation. Each

received its code name. Von Kuhl's plan of an attack against the front La Bassée-Armentières was 'St. George I'; an attack on the Ypres salient, 'St. George II'; one on Arras-Notre Dame de Lorette, 'Mars.' Lastly, there were the 'Michaels' I, II and III. It was not until January 24, after profound detailed study, that the choice was finally made in favour of the 'Michaels.'

The objective of this attack was to break through the Allied front and reach the Somme from Ham to Péronne. The date originally fixed was March 20. The battle was to be extended by the attack 'Mars South,' a few days later, and a subsidiary attack, called 'Archangel,' by the Seventh Army south of the Oise was to be used as a diversion. Preparations for both the 'St. Georges' were also to be completed by the beginning of April. Sixty-two divisions were available for the three 'Michaels' and 'Mars South,' viz. Seventeenth Army: fifteen attack divisions, two ordinary divisions; Second Army: fifteen attack divisions, three ordinary divisions; Eighteenth Army: nineteen attack divisions, five ordinary divisions; Reserve: three attack divisions. In spite of some differences of opinion with von der Schulenberg and with von Hutier as to the direction and emphasis of the offensive in its various stages, Ludendorff adhered to his own conception: 'The British must be beaten.' They could best be beaten by the attack on either side of St. Quentin biting off the Cambrai salient. The Eighteenth Army would thereafter form a defensive flank along the Somme to hold off the French, and all the rest of the available German forces, wheeling as they advanced, were to attack the British in a north-west direction and drive them toward the coast. The two 'St. George' operations remained in hand as further and potentially final blows. On these foundations all the German armies concerned perfected their arrangements.

Finally on March 10 the Emperor approved the following order:—

#### CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF.

Great Headquarters 10.3, issued 12.3.

His Majesty commands:

(1) That the Michael Attack take place on 21st March. First penetration of the hostile position 9.40 a.m.

(2) The first great tactical objective of Crown Prince Rupprecht's Group of Armies will be to cut off the British in the Cambrai salient and, north of the river Omignon and as far as the junction of that river with the Somme, to capture the line Croisilles-Bapaume-Péronne . . . Should the progress of the attack by the right wing be very favourable it will push on beyond Croisilles. The subsequent task of the Group of

Armies will be to push on towards Arras-Albert, left wing fixed on the Somme near Péronne, and with the main weight of the attack on the right flank to shake the English front opposite Sixth Army and to liberate further German forces from their stationary warfare for the advance. All divisions in rear of Fourth and Sixth Armies are to be brought forward forthwith in case of such an event.

(3) The German Crown Prince's Group of Armies is first of all to capture the Somme and Crozat Canal south of river Omignon. By advancing rapidly the Eighteenth Army must seize the crossings over the Somme and over the Canal. It must also be prepared to extend its right flank as far as Péronne. The Group of Armies will study the question of reinforcing the left wing of the Army by divisions from Seventh, First and Third Armies.

(4) O.H.L.<sup>1</sup> keeps control of 2nd Guard, 26th Württemberg and 12th Divisions.

(5) O.H.L. reserves its decision as regards Mars and Archangel, and will be guided by the course of events. Preparations for these are to be carried on uninterruptedly.

(6) The remaining Armies are to act in accordance with C.G.S. Operation Order 6925, dated 4th March. Rupprecht's Group of Armies will protect the right wing of the Mars-Michael operation against an English counter-attack. The German Crown Prince's Group of Armies will withdraw before any big attack by the French against Seventh (exclusive of Archangel front), Third and First Armies.

O.H.L. reserves its decision as regards the Groups of Armies of Gallwitz and Duke Albrecht concerning the strategic measures to be taken in the event of a big attack by the French or concerning the further withdrawal of divisions for the battle zone.

VON HINDENBURG.

Accompanied by the Master-General of the Ordnance, on March 19 I held a conference in the Armoury at Montreuil with the Chief of the Staff, the head of the Tank Corps, and a number of officers and experts, to settle the scheme of the Tank programme for 1919, and to time and organize the deliveries of tanks in 1918. I stayed with the Commander-in-Chief. After luncheon Sir Douglas Haig took me into his private room and explained on his map the situation as he viewed it. The enormous German concentration on the British front, and particularly opposite the Fifth Army, was obvious. Though nothing was certain, the Commander-in-Chief was daily expecting an attack of the first

<sup>1</sup> Main Headquarters.



magnitude. The enemy masses in the north made it possible that the British front from Ypres to Messines would be assaulted. But the main developments were clearly to be expected on the sectors of the front from Arras to Péronne and even farther south. All these possibilities had already been amplified to me the day before by General Birch, the Chief of Artillery. His map showed very clearly the areas which the Germans were infecting with mustard gas (presumably to forbid them as manœuvring ground to both sides for some days) and the wide gaps between these areas over which no doubt the hostile offensive would be launched. There were also heavy enemy concentrations, though less pronounced, against the French in the sector of the Aisne. Speaking generally, more than half the German divisions in the west were ranged against the front of the British armies ; and over broad stretches, the estimated enemy rifle power, the most significant index, was four times what it was against the French.

The Commander-in-Chief viewed the coming shock with an anxious but resolute eye. He dwelt with insistence on the undue strain put upon his armies by the arrangement made by the War Cabinet with the French, in which he had reluctantly acquiesced, for the extension of the British front so far to the south as Barisis. He also complained of the pressure put upon him in such a situation to assign a large portion of his limited forces to the general reserve. His forces were inadequate for even sectional and G.H.Q. Reserves. How could he then find troops for a General Reserve ? I suggested that if, as he believed, the enemy's main weight were to be thrown against the British, he would get the benefit of the whole of this reserve ; and if not, *caderet quæstio*. To this he said he preferred the arrangements he had made with General Pétain, by which seven or eight British or French divisions were to be held ready to move laterally north or south according as the French or British should be found to be the object of the attack. From a general survey of the front it appeared that 110 German divisions faced 57 British, of which at least 40 German divisions faced our Fifth Army ; that 85 German divisions faced 95 French ; and that 4 German divisions faced the first 9 American divisions, which had entered the line at various points, but particularly in the neighbourhood of St. Mihiel.

Our conversation ended about three o'clock. When I came out, the Master-General of the Ordnance suggested to me that as I had two days to spare before beginning the Chemical Warfare Conference at St. Omer, we should pay a flying visit to our old division, the 9th, which I had served in while it was in his charge, and which was now commanded by General Tudor, a friend of mine since subaltern days in India. We set off forth-

with. General Tudor's headquarters were at Nurlu, in the devastated region ten miles to the north of Péronne, near the salient of the British line and in the centre of the threatened front. We received a hearty welcome when we arrived after dark upon a tranquil front lit rarely by a gun-flash.

General Tudor was in high expectation. Everything was in readiness. 'When do you think it will come?' we asked. 'Perhaps to-morrow morning. Perhaps the day after. Perhaps the week after.' We spent the whole of the next day in the trenches. A deathly and suspicious silence brooded over the front. For hours not a cannon shot was fired. Yet the sunlit fields were instinct with foreboding. The 9th Division were holding what they called 'The Disaster Front,' i.e. where the line had been stabilized after the successful German counter-stroke following the Battle of Cambrai. We examined every part of the defences from Gauche Wood, held by the gallant South Africans, the 'Springboks' as they were called, to the medium artillery positions on the slopes behind Havrincourt village. Certainly nothing that human thought and effort could accomplish had been neglected. For four miles in depth the front was a labyrinth of wire and scientifically sited machine-gun nests. The troops, though thin on the ground, were disposed so as to secure full value from every man. Rumours and reasonable expectations that the Germans would employ large numbers of tanks had led to the construction of broad minefields studded with buried shells with sensitive fuses amid wire entanglements. Through the narrow paths across these areas we picked our way gingerly. The sun was setting as we left Gauche Wood and took our leave of the South Africans. I see them now, serene as the Spartans of Leonidas on the eve of Thermopylæ.

Before I went to my bed in the ruins of Nurlu, Tudor said to me: 'It is certainly coming now. Trench raids this evening have identified no less than eight enemy battalions on a single half-mile of the front.' The night was quiet except for a rumble of artillery fire, mostly distant, and the thudding explosions of occasional aeroplane raids. I woke up in a complete silence at a few minutes past four and lay musing. Suddenly, after what seemed about half an hour, the silence was broken by six or seven very loud and very heavy explosions several miles away. I thought they were our 12-inch guns, but they were probably mines. And then, exactly as a pianist runs his hands across the keyboard from treble to bass, there rose in less than one minute the most tremendous cannonade I shall ever hear. 'At 4.30 a.m.,' says Ludendorff in his account, 'our barrage came down with a crash.' Far away, both to the north and to the south, the intense roar and reverberation rolled upwards to us, while through the

chinks in the carefully papered window the flame of the bombardment lit like flickering firelight my tiny cabin.

I dressed and went out. On the duckboards outside the Mess I met Tudor. 'This is it,' he said. 'I have ordered all our batteries to open. You will hear them in a minute.' But the crash of the German shells bursting on our trench lines eight thousand yards away was so overpowering that the accession to the tumult of nearly two hundred guns firing from much nearer to us could not be even distinguished. From the Divisional Headquarters on the high ground of Nurlu one could see the front line for many miles. It swept around us in a wide curve of red leaping flame stretching to the north far along the front of the Third Army, as well as of the Fifth Army on the south, and quite unending in either direction. There were still two hours to daylight, and the enormous explosions of the shells upon our trenches seemed almost to touch each other, with hardly an interval in space or time. Among the bursting shells there rose at intervals, but almost continually, the much larger flames of exploding magazines. The weight and intensity of the bombardment surpassed anything which anyone had ever known before.

Only one gun was firing at the Headquarters. He belonged to the variety called 'Percy,' and all his shells fell harmlessly a hundred yards away. A quarter of a mile to the south along the Péronne road a much heavier gun was demolishing the divisional canteen. Daylight supervened on pandemonium, and the flame picture pulsated under a pall of smoke from which great fountains of the exploding 'dumps' rose mushroom-headed. It was my duty to leave these scenes; and at ten o'clock, with mingled emotions, I bade my friends farewell and motored without misadventure along the road to Péronne. The impression I had of Tudor was of an iron peg hammered into the frozen ground, immovable. And so indeed it proved. The 9th Division held not only its Battle but its Forward Zone at the junction of the Third and Fifth Armies against every assault, and only retired when ordered to do so in consequence of the general movement of the line.

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It is possible here to give only the barest outline of the battle. Many full and excellent accounts exist. Many more will be written. Taking its scale and intensity together, quantity and quality combined, 'Michael' must be regarded without exception as the greatest onslaught in the history of the world. From the Sensée River to the Oise, on a front of forty miles, the Germans launched simultaneously thirty-seven divisions of

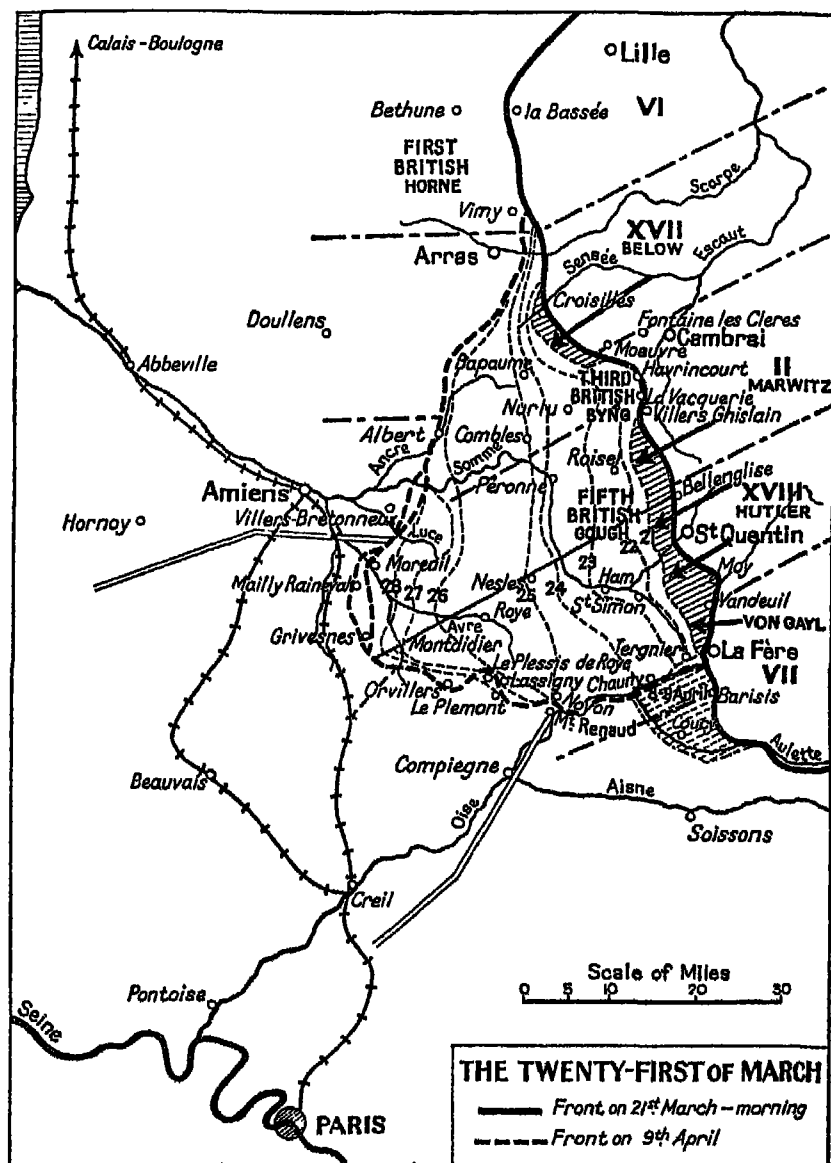
infantry, covered by nearly 6,000 guns. They held in close support nearly thirty divisions more. On the same front the British line of battle was held by seventeen divisions and 2,500 guns, with five divisions in support. In all, the Germans had marshalled and set in motion rather more than three-quarters of a million men against 300,000 British. Over the two ten-mile sectors lying to the north and the south of the salient in which the 9th Division stood, the density of the enemy's formation provided an assaulting division for every thousand yards of ground, and attained the superiority of four to one.

The British troops involved constituted the whole of the Fifth and nearly half the Third Army under the command of General Gough and General Byng respectively. The system of defence comprised a Forward Zone intended to delay the enemy and to break his formations, and a Battle Zone in which the main struggle was to be fought. The average depth of the defensive system was about four miles; behind which again lay a Reserve Zone which there had not been time or labour to fortify, except for the defences of the medium and heavy batteries. Indeed, on the whole of the Fifth Army front, but especially in the newly-transferred sector from the Omignon to Barisis, many of the entrenched lines and points existed only in a rudimentary form. The rear zone, for instance, had a mere line a few inches deep cut in the turf, and communications in the shape of good roads and light railways were still lacking. The method of defence consisted in an intricate arrangement of small posts, machine-gun nests, and redoubts, mutually supporting each other, communicating with each other where necessary by trenches and tunnels, and covered or sustained by an exact organization of artillery barrages. Behind the front of the British lay the wilderness of the Somme battlefield. Their left hand rested in a strategic sense upon the massive buttress of the Vimy Ridge; their right was in touch with comparatively weak French forces.

There was no surprise about the time or general direction of the attack. The surprise consisted in its weight, scale and power.

After a bombardment of incredible fury for not more than two to four hours, accompanied at certain points by heavy discharges of poison gas, the German infantry began to advance. The whole of this region had been in their possession during 1915 and the greater part of 1916, and there was no lack in any unit of officers and men who knew every inch of the ground. The form of attack which they adopted was an extension of the method of 'infiltration' first tried by them in their counter-stroke after the Battle of Cambrai. A low-lying fog, which was in some places dense, favoured their plan at any rate in the initial stages. The system of detached posts on which the British

relied, and which their comparatively small numbers had made necessarily rather open in character, depended to a very large



extent upon clear vision, both for the machine gunners themselves and to a lesser extent for their protecting artillery. Aided by the mist, the German infantry freely entered the

Forward Zone in small parties of shock troops, carrying with them machine guns and trench mortars. They were followed by large bodies, and even by noon had at many points penetrated the Battle Zone. The British posts, blasted, stunned or stifled by the bombardment or the gas, mystified and baffled by the fog, isolated and often taken in the rear, defended themselves stubbornly and with varying fortunes. Over the whole of the battlefield, which comprised approximately 160 square miles, a vast number of bloody struggles ensued. But the Germans, guided by their excellent organization and their local knowledge, and backed by their immense superiority in numbers, continued during the day to make inroads upon the Battle Zone, and even to pierce it at several points. When darkness fell, nearly all the British divisions had been forced from their original fighting line, and were intermingled at many points with the enemy in the Battle Zone.

The devoted resistance of the isolated British posts levied a heavy toll upon the enemy and played a recognizable part in the final result. From the outset the Germans learned that they had to deal with troops who would fight as long as they had ammunition, irrespective of what happened in any other quarter of the field or whether any hope of success or escape remained. A few instances of these forlorn struggles may record the glories of a hundred.

A platoon of the 2nd London (58th Division) holding Travecy Keep, north of La Fère, was entirely cut off in the morning and constantly attacked. All through the 21st they maintained themselves. They repulsed three heavy attacks at dusk on the 21st, at dawn on the 22nd and at midday on the 22nd. It was not until 5.30 p.m. on the 22nd that this handful of men, alone in the midst of the hostile army and with their ammunition running short, were compelled to surrender.

A company of the 7th Buffs (18th Division) garrisoned Vendeuil Fort in the same neighbourhood. They were first attacked about 9.45 a.m. on the 21st. The Germans advanced in close formation, and their attack was repulsed with great loss and the capture of some prisoners. The enemy then advanced past the fort in the fog, and its defenders knew they were cut off. Both in the evening of the 21st and after bombardment with field guns at dawn on the 22nd, the German attacks were again repulsed. During the 22nd this company was able to fire on long columns of cavalry, guns and transport passing their fort, and to drive them from the line of march. Not until 4.30 p.m. on the 22nd, when food and ammunition were both exhausted and there was no hope of relief, did they surrender.

On March 22nd Ricardo Redoubt, near Fontaine-les-Clercs

(8 miles north-east of Ham), was held by the remains of the 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (36th Division), in all 275 officers and men. During the morning the place was surrounded and repeatedly attacked. About 2 p.m. the Germans brought up field artillery and bombarded the redoubt at close range. About an hour later the enemy gained a footing in the redoubt, and the struggle was continued inside. The Commanding Officer was now wounded, but it was not until 4.40 p.m. that the garrison was crushed after what the history of the German 3rd Guard Regiment describes as 'a most gallant resistance.'

On the 21st the headquarters and two companies of the 8th Queen's (24th Division) held the village of Le Verguier, seven miles north-west of St. Quentin, in the Battle Zone. During the day heavy frontal and flank attacks were made by the enemy, but all were repulsed. Greatly superior numbers of the enemy lay dead in the wire entanglements. No progress could be made by the Germans in this quarter. At 6.30 a.m. on the 22nd, aided by the morning mist, the enemy renewed his attack. The attack from the east by the German 185th Regiment failed. But the 5th German Guards, attacking from the north, succeeded in penetrating the side of the village and took in rear the defenders of the east face. The eastern part of the village was thus lost; but Fort Greathead and Fort Lees, as these small posts were called, on the western outskirts still held out. All men who could retire from the other posts reinforced these two, and thus strengthened they continued to repulse repeated attacks. The battalion headquarters in a sunken road south of the village was then discovered and attacked by the enemy. Orderlies, servants and cooks were quickly collected, and a spirited fight at close quarters ensued. The Germans were driven off.

About 9.30 a.m. the Commanding Officer went towards Fort Lees, the more northerly of the two posts and found it had been lost. The remainder of the battalion was now nearly surrounded, and orders were given to retire. The defenders of Fort Greathead and of the battalion headquarters assembled in the sunken road leading south-westward from the village, and under cover of the mist marched off and rejoined their division with only one further casualty. They had defended Le Verguier for twenty-four hours, and its ruins with their last defenders were taken by converging attacks made by five German battalions from north, east and south, supported by all the available artillery of two divisions.

On the 22nd one company of the 11th Royal Scots (9th

Division) was holding Revelon Farm, near Heudicourt (9 miles north-east of Péronne). During the afternoon Heudicourt Station, to the south of Revelon Farm, was taken by the enemy. This enabled him to advance on the farm from the south as well as from the east. The British record can carry the tale no further than that the company of the Royal Scots were last seen fighting hard for their farm at 5 p.m. German accounts however testify to their defence. Bombarded at close range by artillery and trench mortars, bombed by aeroplanes, and kept under ceaseless streams of machine-gun bullets, the survivors resisted to the uttermost; and it was nearly 6 o'clock when parts of three different German regiments stormed the farm. In the soldierly words of the history of the German 123rd Regiment, 'they covered the retreat of the main body to the extent of being destroyed themselves.'

The conflict was continuous. Fresh German troops poured ceaselessly into action. By the evening of the 22nd the British Fifth Army had been driven completely beyond its Battle Zone and half the Army was beyond its last prescribed defensive line. The British Third Army still fought in and around the Battle Zone. The German penetration south of the Oise had made serious progress. The British losses by death, wounds or capture exceeded 100,000 men; and nearly 500 guns were already lost. An immense slaughter was also wrought upon the German side. At every step they paid the price of the offensive, but their great numbers rendered their losses inappreciable during the crisis. Overwhelming reserves were close at hand. The British on the other hand had only eight divisions in general reserve, of which five were readily available; and the French were too slowly moved or too far away to give effective assistance for several days. Therefore on the night of the 22nd, Sir Hubert Gough ordered a general retreat of the Fifth Army behind the Somme. His orders had been 'to protect at all costs the important centre of Péronne and the River Somme to the South' of it. He was fully justified in retiring in a general rear-guard action up to this line. But once the retreat of so thin a line on such a wide front had begun, it was very difficult to stop as long as the enemy pressure continued. The circumstances of each corps or division were so various that those who made a stand found their flanks exposed by others falling back. A great many of the bridges across the Somme were blown up; but enough were left—and among them the most important bridges, confided to the Railway authorities and not to the troops—to enable the Germans to pass artillery rapidly across. Moreover, the river was easily fordable at this time.



Backward then across the hideous desolation of the old crater-fields rolled the British front for five days in succession. The Cavalry Corps filled the gaps in the line, and the Air Force, concentrating all its strength upon the battle, flying low, inflicted heavy losses on the endless marching columns. Meanwhile reserves drawn from other parts of the line, and improvised forces from the schools and technical establishments, continually reached the scene. At the same time, with every day's advance, the strength and momentum of the German thrust abated. The actual fighting gave place to the painful toiling westward of two weary armies; and when the retreating British were sufficiently reinforced to come to a general halt, their pursuers found themselves not less exhausted, and far in front of their own artillery and supplies. By the evening of the 27th the first crisis of the great battle was over.

All the 'Michaels' had struck their blow. But where was 'Mars'? The Sixth Army and the right of the Seventeenth were to have entered the battle towards Arras and the Vimy Ridge on the 23rd. That they did not attack till the 28th was due to a deeply significant cause. General Byng had secretly withdrawn his troops from the line at Monchy, and already occupied a position four miles in the rear. The Germans bombarded the empty trenches of a false front. It took them four days and nights to bring their artillery forward and mount the assault against the new position. Thus the second great wave did not synchronize with the full surge of the first. The second great battle did not contribute to the intensity of the first, but came as a separate event after the climax of the first was over. Moreover the progress made by the Second and the Seventeenth German Armies in the original attack had not fulfilled Ludendorff's expectations. At 9.30 on the morning of the 23rd he was led to abandon his prime strategic hope, namely the general defeat and driving to the coast of the British armies in France, and to content himself with the extremely valuable definite objective of dividing the British from the French through the capture of Amiens toward which the Eighteenth and Second Armies were progressing. His order given at noon was: 'A considerable portion of the British Army has now been beaten. . . . The objective of the operation is now to separate the French and British by a rapid advance on both sides of the Somme.' This was already a remarkable contraction of aim.

On the morning of the 28th the delayed attack against the Arras position (Mars) began. It was delivered on a twenty-mile front by twenty German divisions against eight British divisions. The methods of both sides were the same as on March 21. But the weather was clear, and the machine guns and artillery of the

defence could reach their highest concert. Everywhere the attack was repulsed with tremendous slaughter. Even the Forward Zone was held at many points. Nowhere was the Battle Zone seriously affected. No outside reserves were required by the defending divisions. The Germans, who advanced with the utmost bravery, were mown down in heaps.<sup>1</sup> As the result of the eight days' struggle the British Army, virtually unaided by the French, had stemmed or broken the greatest offensive ever launched.

The French had been coming fitfully and feebly into action on the Southern portion of the battlefield from the morning of the 23rd. At dawn that day one division (the 125th) came into action. A French dismounted cavalry division entered the line in the evening. The 9th, 10th, 62nd and 22nd French Divisions were in line on the afternoon of the 24th, though two of them had no artillery and none of them had 'cookers' or more than fifty rounds of rifle ammunition per man. On the morning of the 25th General Fayolle assumed responsibility for the whole of the Fifth Army front south of the Somme. But up till the 27th the main weight of the fighting, even in this area, still continued to be borne by the exhausted British troops. At no time up till the end of the 28th, when both the first and second crises of the battle were over, did the French have simultaneously in action more than six divisions, and none of these were seriously engaged. The struggle up till its turning point on the 28th was between the British and Germans alone.

Its last phase was now at hand, and in this the ever-gathering strength of the French on those portions of the front still involved played an equal part with the British. The Eighteenth German Army, brushing back weak French resistance, had actually taken Montdidier on the 27th. But this was the farthest point of the German advance. Says Ludendorff: 'The enemy's line was now becoming denser, and in places they were even attacking themselves; while our armies were no longer strong enough to overcome them unaided. The ammunition was not sufficient, and supply became difficult. The repair of roads and railways was taking too long, in spite of all our preparations. After thoroughly replenishing ammunition, the Eighteenth Army attacked between Montdidier and Noyon on March 30. On April 4 the Second Army and the right wing of the Eighteenth attacked at Albert, south of the Somme towards Amiens. These actions were *indecisive*.<sup>2</sup> It was an established fact that the enemy's resistance

<sup>1</sup> 'It would almost seem,' says Sir Douglas Haig's Staff Officer, 'as if the only difference numbers in the attack make to a properly located machine-gun defence, when there is light and time to see, is to provide a better target.' No one can quarrel with such a conclusion.

<sup>2</sup> My italics.

was beyond our strength. . . . The battle was over by April 4.'

Let us focus what had actually happened. With whom lay the victory? Contrary to the generally accepted verdict, I hold that the Germans, judged by the hard test of gains and losses, were decisively defeated. Ludendorff failed to achieve a single strategic object. By the morning of the 23rd he had been forced to resign his dream of overwhelming and crumpling back upon the sea the main strength of the British armies, and to content himself with the hope of capturing Amiens and perhaps dividing the British from the French. After April 4 he abandoned both these most important but to him secondary aims. 'Strategically,' he says, 'we had not achieved what the events of the 23rd, 24th and 25th had encouraged us to hope for. That we had also failed to take Amiens . . . was specially disappointing.' What then had been gained? The Germans had reoccupied their old battlefields and the regions they had so cruelly devastated and ruined a year before. Once again they entered into possession of those grisly trophies. No fertile province, no wealthy cities, no river or mountain barrier, no new untapped resources were their reward. Only the crater-fields extending abominably wherever the eye could turn, the old trenches, the vast grave-yards, the skeletons, the blasted trees and the pulverized villages—these, from Arras to Montdidier and from St. Quentin to Villers-Bretonneux, were the Dead Sea fruits of the mightiest military conception and the most terrific onslaught which the annals of war record. The price they paid was heavy. They lost for the first time in the war, or at any rate since Ypres in 1914, two soldiers killed for every one British, and three officers killed for every two British. They made 60,000 prisoners and captured over a thousand guns, together with great stores of ammunition and material. But their advantage in prisoners was more than offset by their greater loss in wounded. Their consumption of material exceeded their captures. If the German loss of men was serious, the loss of time was fatal. The great effort had been made and had not succeeded. The German Army was no longer crouched, but sprawled. A great part of its reserves had been exposed and involved. The stress of peril on the other hand wrung from the Allies exertions and sacrifices which, as will be seen, far more than made good their losses.

The recriminations upon this battle left a lasting imprint on British political history. In April, General Maurice, the Director at the War Office of Military Operations, indignant at the failure to reinforce the Army in the winter, accused Mr. Lloyd George of incorrectly stating to the House of Commons the facts and figures of the case. Tension and uncertainty arose not only in the Opposition, but among the Government supporters, and even in its own ranks. When a formal challenge in debate was made by

Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister convinced the House that his statement had been founded on information supplied in writing by General Maurice's Deputy. This was decisive on the issue, and the actual merits of the controversy were scarcely discussed. The division which followed was accepted by Mr. Lloyd George as marking the cleavage between his Liberal followers and those of Mr. Asquith. When, eight months later, in the hour of victory, the General Election took place, all who had voted against the Government on this occasion were opposed by the triumphant Coalition, and scarcely any escaped political exclusion. The reverberations of the quarrel continue to this day.

We may however attempt a provisional judgment. If Haig had not consumed his armies at Passchendaele, or if at least he had been content to stop that offensive in September, he would have commanded (without any addition to the drafts actually sent him from England in the winter) sufficient reserves on March 21 to enable him to sustain the threatened front. But for the horror which Passchendaele inspired in the minds of the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet, he would no doubt have been supplied with very much larger reinforcements. He would thus have gained both in economy of life and also in larger reinforcements. If, notwithstanding Passchendaele, the War Cabinet had reinforced him as they should have done, the front could still have been held on March 21. The responsibility for the causes which led to the British inadequacy of numbers is shared between General Headquarters and the War Cabinet. By constitutional doctrine the greatest responsibility unquestionably rests upon the War Cabinet, who failed to make their Commander conform to their convictions on a question which far transcended the military or technical sphere, and who also failed to do full justice to the Army because of their disagreement with the Commander-in-Chief. In view however of the preponderance of military influence in time of war, and the serious dangers of a collision between the 'soldiers' and the politicians, a very considerable burden must be borne by the British Headquarters.

\* \* \* \* \*

My work at the Chemical Warfare School near St. Omer occupied the whole of the 23rd, and I did not reach London till midday on the 24th. No information of any value about the progress of the battle had been available at the Chemical School. I therefore went immediately to the War Office to learn the news from France. Sir Henry Wilson, with the gravest face, showed me the telegrams and his own map. We both walked across to Downing Street, where the Prime Minister was expecting him. It was a bright crisp day, and Mr. Lloyd George was seated in

the garden with Lord French. He seemed to think that I had news at first hand, and turned towards me. I explained that I knew nothing beyond what he had already read in his telegrams, and had seen nothing but the first few hours of the bombardment in a single sector. After some general conversation he took me aside and posed the following question: If we could not hold the line we have fortified so carefully, why should we be able to hold any positions farther back with troops already defeated? I answered that every offensive lost its force as it proceeded. It was like throwing a bucket of water over the floor. It first rushed forward, then soaked forward, and finally stopped altogether until another bucket could be brought. After thirty or forty miles there would certainly come a considerable breathing space, when the front could be reconstituted if every effort were made. It appeared that he had already despatched Lord Milner to France, though I was not aware of this. The Chief of the Staff said that he himself intended to go over that night. We arranged to dine together at my house in Eccleston Square before he left. Only my wife was present. I never remember in the whole course of the war a more anxious evening. One of the great qualities in Mr. Lloyd George was his power of obliterating the past and concentrating his whole being upon meeting the new situation. There were 200,000 troops in England that could be swiftly sent. What about munitions and equipment? Wilson said, 'We might well lose a thousand guns,' and that mountains of ammunition and stores of every kind must have been abandoned. I was thankful to be in a position to say that about these at least there need be no worry. Everything could be replaced at once from our margins without affecting the regular supply. Presently the Chief of the General Staff went to catch his train, and we were left alone together. The resolution of the Prime Minister was unshaken under his truly awful responsibilities.

Meanwhile an event had occurred which, though it did not influence the course of the battle, was nevertheless of capital importance. On the night of the 24th, when the battle was at its worst, General Pétain, whose weak and tardy assistance was causing grave concern, met Haig and his Chief of Staff at Dury near Amiens. Although sixty-two German divisions had already been identified in the battle, of which forty-eight were fresh from the Reserve, Pétain asserted that the main blow was yet to fall, and that it would fall on the French in Champagne. He informed Haig that if the Germans continued to press on to Amiens, the French troops then concentrating about Montdidier would be withdrawn upon Beauvais to cover Paris in accordance with the orders of the French Government. He indicated

that action in this sense had already been taken. Haig's original orders, given him personally by Lord Kitchener more than two years before, were in brief to 'keep united with the French Army at all costs.' But here at the crisis was a complete abandonment of the basic principle of unity.

On learning this fatal intention, Sir Douglas Haig telegraphed to the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to come over immediately. But both, as we have seen, had already started independently. Milner, acting with the necessary energy, after seeing Haig's Chief of the Staff at St. Omer, motored straight through to Paris and collected the President of the Republic, Clémenceau and Foch. Together they all proceeded to Compiègne on the 25th, examined Pétain as to his intentions, and finally, bringing Pétain with them, at noon on the 26th met Haig at Doullens, where Henry Wilson had already arrived. The magnitude of the danger had melted all prejudices and oppositions, personal and national alike. Only one name was in every mind. Foch, a week ago described as a 'dotard,' was the indispensable man. He alone possessed the size and the combative energy to prevent the severance of the French and British armies. Milner proposed that Foch should have control of the forces in front of Amiens. Haig declared that this was insufficient and that Foch must be given actual command of the French and British armies as a whole 'from the Alps to the North Sea.' At a conference in London a month before, the old 'Tiger' had dealt abruptly with the outspoken misgivings of Foch. 'Taisez-vous. I am the representative of France.' Now it was Foch's turn to speak. 'It is a hard task you offer me now : a compromised situation, a crumbling front, an adverse battle in full progress. Nevertheless, I accept.' Thus there was established for the first time on the Western Front that unity of command towards which Mr. Lloyd George had long directed his cautious, devious but persevering steps, and to which, whatever may be said to the contrary (and it is not little), history will ascribe an incalculable advantage for the cause of the Allies.

The emergency arrangements were confirmed and elaborated a few weeks later in the so-called 'Beauvais Agreement' under which the Commander-in-Chief of a National Army was secured right of appeal to his own Government if he claimed that an order of the Generalissimo endangered the safety of his troops.

Hard measure was meted out to General Gough. The Fifth Army from the 28th onwards ceased to exist. Its shattered divisions were painfully reorganized behind the line. The gap was filled by the now rapidly arriving French, by the cavalry, by the improvised forces collected from the Schools, and by

General Rawlinson who began, from scanty and diverse materials, to constitute a 'Fourth Army' and to maintain the tottering and fluctuating line of battle.

Gough never received another fighting command. The Cabinet insisted on his removal on the ground, probably valid, that he had lost the confidence of his troops. This officer had fought his way upwards through the whole war from a Cavalry Brigade to the command of an Army. He was held to have greatly distinguished himself on the Ancre at the close of 1916. With Plumer he bore the brunt of Passchendaele while it continued, and its blame when it ended rested upon him. He was a typical cavalry officer, with a strong personality and a gay and boyish charm of manner. A man who never spared himself or his troops, the instrument of costly and forlorn attacks, he emerged from the Passchendaele tragedy pursued by many fierce resentments among his high subordinates, rumours of which had even reached the rank and file. For over a year his reputation had been such that troops and leaders alike disliked inclusion in the Fifth Army. There was a conviction that in that Army supplies were awkward and attacks not sufficiently studied. In these circumstances Gough was not in a position to surmount the impression of a great disaster. The sternest critic has however been unable to find ground for censuring his general conduct of the battle of March 21. It appears that he took every measure, both before and during the battle, which experience and energy could devise and of which his utterly inadequate resources admitted; that his composure never faltered, that his activity was inexhaustible, that his main decisions were prudent and resolute, and that no episode in his career was more honourable than the disaster which entailed his fall.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was my responsibility to make good the assurance I had given that all losses in material would be immediately replaced; and for this the Munitions Council, its eighty departments and its two and a half million workers, men and women, toiled with a cold passion that knew no rest. Everywhere the long-strained factories rejected the Easter breathing space which health required. One thought dominated the whole gigantic organization—to make everything good within a month. Guns, shells, rifles, ammunition, Maxim guns, Lewis guns, tanks, aeroplanes and a thousand ancillaries were all gathered from our jealously hoarded reserves. Risks are relative, and I decided, without subsequent misadventure, to secure an earlier month's supply of guns by omitting the usual firing tests.

On the 26th I issued the following notice:—

*Consolidated to War Cabinet*

*28.3.18*



WHITENALL PLACE,  
S.W.1.

# *Munitions losses*

i. The following are very varied figures for guns & equipments complete available to leave this by April 8th including those in France in France & England, or in transit or at post-office

18 pr.	797.	}	Total Expenditure
4.5" How	399		
60 pr.	164		
6" How.	252		





'A special effort must be made to replace promptly the serious losses in munitions which are resulting from the great battle now in progress. It should be our part in the struggle to maintain the armament and equipment of the fighting troops at the highest level. Our resources are fortunately sufficient to accomplish this up to the present in every class of munitions. But it is necessary to speed up the completion and despatch of important parts of the work in hand. I rely upon every one concerned in the manufacture of tanks to put forward their best efforts. There should therefore be no cessation of this work during the Easter holidays. Please notify your essential sub-contractors to this effect.

'I acknowledge with gratitude the spontaneous assurances already received from the men in many districts that there will be no loss of output. Now is the time to show the fighting army what the industrial army can achieve.'

The response was so complete that explanations had to be offered a few days later to those who felt their work slighted because they had not been called upon to sacrifice their hard-earned holidays.

'The Minister of Munitions desires to acknowledge in the warmest terms the widespread and indeed general response which has been made from all parts of the country to the appeal to the munition workers to give up their Easter holidays. He would like to accept all the offers that have been made. But military and railway exigencies at this juncture make it necessary to confine acceptance to those classes of work particularly referred to in the Minister's appeal. All firms whose work must be specially accelerated have now been notified individually by official telegram that they should work through Easter. Those who have not been notified should take their holidays now. This will allow the railway facilities to be used to the highest advantage for the most urgent needs. It in no way implies that one class of munitions work is more important than another, and it is vital that all munition outputs should be increased to the maximum which material allows.'

Before the end of the month I was able, in the facsimile document here reproduced, to assure the War Cabinet and General Headquarters that nearly two thousand new guns of every nature, with their complete equipments, could be supplied by April 6 as fast as they could be handled by the receiving department of the Army. In fact, however, twelve hundred met the need.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CLIMAX

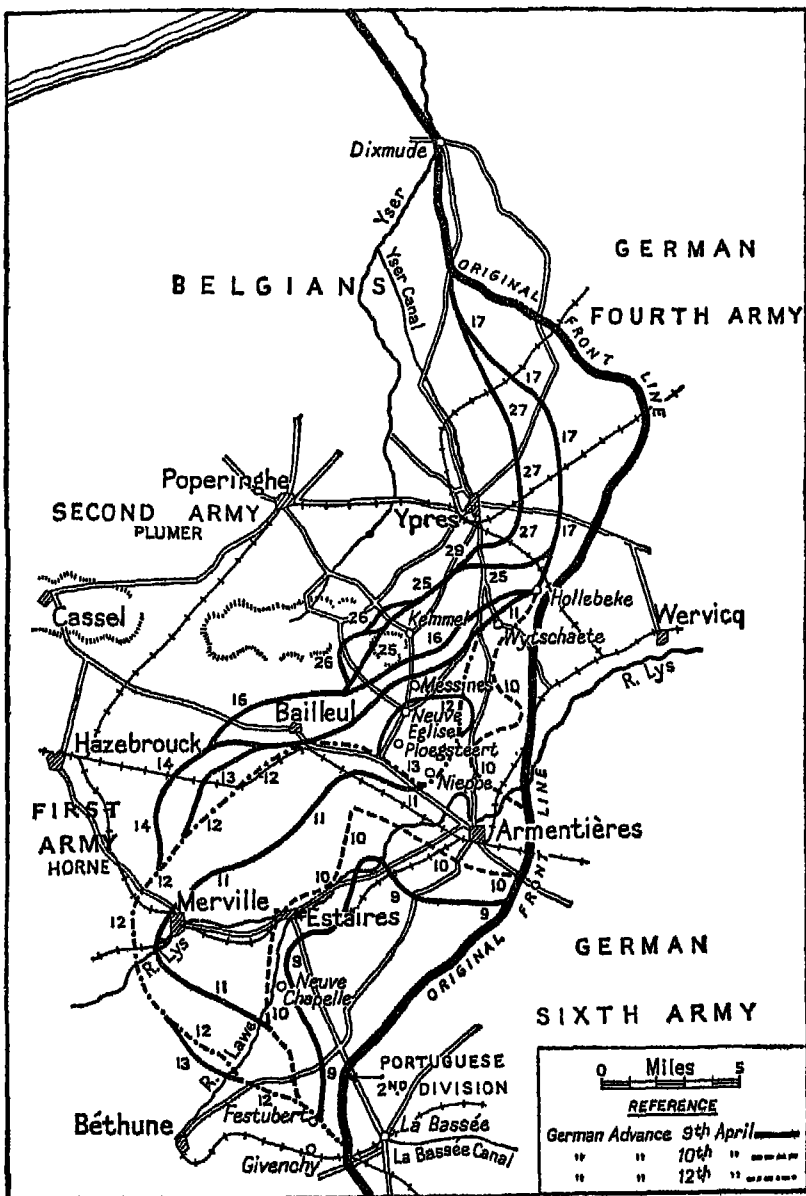
The Battle of the Lys, April 9—The Portuguese Gap—The Second Wave—The Buttrresses stand—The Battle is prolonged—The 'Back-to-the-wall' order—April 12, the Climax—Haig's Appeals to Foch—Reasons for Foch's Obduracy—Munitions and Tanks—The King's Message to the Munition Workers—Two Bleak Hypotheses—My Note of April 18—Tragic Contingencies—Loss of Kemmel Hill—The False Alarm—Ludendorff flinches—Defeat and Losses of the Germans.

ON Tuesday, April 9, the third great battle effort of the Germans against the British began. In order to stem the German advance upon Amiens, Sir Douglas Haig had been forced to thin his line elsewhere. Instead of doing this evenly, he had exercised a wise process of selection. He held in strength the great central bastion from Arras to the La Bassée Canal at Givenchy. This comprised the highly defensible and important area of the Lens coalfields, as well as the mass of commanding ground which included the key positions of the Vimy and Lorette Heights. To the north of this it was inevitable that the line should be dangerously weak. Out of fifty-eight British infantry divisions, forty-six had already been engaged on the Somme. The Fifth Army divisions were reorganizing and unfit to enter the line. To hold the front of 40,000 yards between the La Bassée Canal and the Ypres Canal, Haig could only provide six divisions. Each of these divisions must be stretched to cover over 7,000 yards—stretched wider, that is to say, than the Fifth Army divisions before March 21; and almost all the troops had fought with most severe losses in the preceding fortnight on the Somme. Since even these precarious dispositions could not be completed in the pressure of events before the German blow fell, nearly 10,000 yards of front by Neuve Chapelle were at the moment held by a Portuguese division of four brigades.

It was upon this denuded front, the day before the Portuguese were to have been relieved by two British divisions, that Ludendorff struck. By April 9, seventeen divisions had been added to the German Sixth and four to the German Fourth Army. The Sixth Army was to attack towards Hazebrouck and the heights beyond Kemmel, and the Fourth was to support it and exploit success. The town of Armentières,

having been smothered with gas shells by a bombardment beginning on the evening of the 7th, constituted an impassable area; and with their northern flank thus protected, ten German divisions in an eleven-miles line marched against the 2nd Portuguese Division and the 40th and 55th British Divisions on each side of it. No less than seven German divisions fell upon the four Portuguese brigades, and immediately swept them out of existence as a military force. The 40th Division, its flank opened by the Portuguese disaster, was also speedily overwhelmed. A thick mist blanketed the British machine-gun nests arranged in depth behind the line. Within two hours of the advance of the German infantry a gap of over 15,000 yards had been opened in the front, through which the German masses were pouring. The 50th and 51st Divisions, who formed the British reserves, moved to their appointed stations in the second line of defence at the crossings of the Lys and the Lawe Rivers as soon as the battle began; but the unexampled suddenness of the break-through, the vehemence of the German advance, the streams of retreating Portuguese, and the general confusion prevented them from fully occupying their prepared positions. They were rapidly absorbed in a moving battle against vastly superior numbers. After a day of violent fighting the Germans had reached the outskirts of Estaires, five kilometres behind the original line, and around this pocket of assault the remains of five British divisions struggled to create and maintain a front against sixteen German divisions all fully engaged.

At daylight on the morning of the 10th a second wave of German assault was launched by the German Fourth Army to the north of Armentières on a four-mile front. This phase of the offensive had been timed to begin twenty-four hours after the main attack, in the well-founded expectation that the British reserves in this sector would by then have been drawn into the first battle. Four brigades had in fact been diverted, and the whole weight of five German divisions fell upon five brigades of the 19th and 25th Divisions, who had behind them in reserve only the remaining brigade of the 29th Division. The assault was successful. The front was broken. 'Plugstreet' village, the greater part of Messines and the crest of the Wytschaete Ridge fell into the hands of the enemy by noon. The 34th Division was in the greatest danger of being cut off around Armentières, and by the evening of the 10th the Germans were actual or potential masters of the whole British defensive system from Wytschaete to Givenchy. During the day both Lestrem and Estaires had been taken, and night found the survivors of eight British divisions holding an improvised front of thirty



1918  
 LYS OFFENSIVE 9-18 April  
 KEMMEL „ 25-29 April

miles at death grips with twenty-seven German divisions, of which twenty-one had actually been involved in the battle. The 34th Division extricated itself from Armentières during the night, and only by skill escaped the fast closing pincers.

But while this formidable inroad had been made upon the greater part of the front assailed, the line on either flank held firm. A Lancashire division, the 55th, perfectly fortified and organized in Givenchy and Festubert, continued to repulse for seven successive days every attack, losing 3,000 men and taking 900 prisoners. On the northern flank of the offensive lay the 9th Scottish Division whom we left unshakable at Nurlu on the morning of March 21. After fighting with the utmost distinction and success in that great battle and losing over 5,000 officers and men, it had been hastily filled with drafts and brought to rest and recuperate in what was believed to be a quiet station. The whole front to the southward having been beaten in, its right flank was turned back, and the resurrected South African brigade, at four in the afternoon of the 10th, drove the Germans from the Messines crest. All efforts to oust this division from the position into which it had clawed itself failed. Thus the buttresses stood immovable, although the wall between them was completely battered in. Upon this fact the safety of the whole front and the final result of the battle unquestionably depended.

On the 11th the enemy, his Sixth and Fourth Army fronts united, extended his inroads in every direction except the flanks which he could not widen. Villages and townships, which had for more than three years been the home of the British armies or whose names were associated with hard-won victories, fell into his hands. Merville, Nieppe and the rest of Messines were lost. As his front extended the enemy was able to deploy additional divisions and simultaneously to increase the weight of the attack and stretch the thin-drawn fluctuating line of the defence. The 50th and 51st Divisions maintained during the whole of April 10 and 11 a desperate struggle with seven or more German divisions along an oscillating but receding front of 20,000 yards.

By the end of this day the German line formed a salient or bulge fifteen kilometres deep and sixty-four wide in the original British positions. Meanwhile reinforcements were hurrying to the scene by march, bus and train. The rest of the 29th Division began to arrive on the northern front of attack, and the 4th, 5th, 31st (including the 4th Guards Brigade), 33rd, 61st and 1st Australian Divisions were all moving to the southern sector. Every yard of the ground was disputed, and in the close fierce fighting which never ceased night or day the German losses, like their numbers, were at least double those of the British. Here at

last, though perilous, agonizing and unrecognised, was the real battle of attrition.

The initial success of the German thrust had exceeded Ludendorff's expectations, and during the first forty-eight hours of the battle he formed the resolve to extend the scale of the attack and strike with all his strength for the Channel ports. From April 12 onwards the German reserves were thrown profusely into the conflict, and both the German Army Commanders, Quast and Sixt von Arnim, were encouraged to draw freely from the main concentrations in the north. Begun as a diversion to draw Allied reserves from the Amiens front, the Battle of the Lys had now become a primary operation.

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From the general not less than from the British point of view, April 12 is probably, after the Marne, the climax of the war. It looked as if the Germans had resolved to stake their fate and their regathered superiority on battering the life out of the British Army. During twenty days they had hurled nearly ninety divisions in three great battles upon an Army which counted no more than fifty-eight, and of these nearly half were fastened to fronts not under attack. With a superiority of numbers in the areas of assault of three and often four to one, with their brilliantly trained shock troops, with their extraordinary skill and enterprise in manœuvring with machine guns and trench mortars, with their new infiltration scheme, with their corroding mustard gas, with their terrific artillery and great science of war, they might well succeed. The French seemed to the British Headquarters sunk in stupor and passivity. Since the Nivelle disaster they had been grappling with mutiny and nursing their remaining resources. With the exception of the 'set piece' battle of Malmaison in the winter, and the stinted and tardy divisions which had been involved south of the Somme in the later stages of March 21, they had only fought in ordinary trench warfare for nearly nine months. During that time the much smaller British Army had fought almost unceasingly, and wisely or unwisely had sacrificed in the common cause, apart from the prolonged Arras-Messines offensive of 1917, more than 400,000 men in the Passchendaele tragedy, and had now lost nearly 300,000 more under Ludendorff's terrible hammer. It was upon an Army bled white by frightful losses, its regimental officers shorn away by scores of thousands, its batteries and battalions filled and refilled with young soldiers plunged into battle before they knew their officers or each other, that the massed might of the desperate German Empire now fell.

Moreover, the shock could not be deadened nor breathing

space gained by ceding ground. No large retirement like the '*Alberich*' manœuvre was open to Sir Douglas Haig. A few kilometres might be yielded here and there. The dearly bought ground of Passchendaele could be given up and some relief obtained thereby. Ypres could in the last resource be let go. But in front of Amiens, in front of Arras, in front of Béthune, in front of Hazebrouck he must stand or fall. Therefore on the morning of the 12th the Commander, usually so restrained and, as it had seemed, unresponsive, published to his troops the order of the day which is printed in facsimile on the opposite page: 'There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.' All units and all ranks of the British Expeditionary Force therefore prepared themselves to conquer or die.

The convulsion continued. The reinforcements closed the gaps that were hourly torn in the struggling line. Companies, battalions, even whole brigades were obliterated where they stood. Ludendorff, resolute, ruthless, hazard-loving, raised his stakes. More and more of the German reserves were committed to the onset. The roar of the cannonade resounded through Flanders and reverberated across the Channel. But nothing could move the 55th Division on the right nor the 9th on the left. The Australians were coming, but their trains were late; and the 4th Guards Brigade all through the 12th and 13th may be discerned, where all was valour, barring the path to Hazebrouck. So intermingled were the units and formations in the fighting line, that across the Bailleul-Armentières road, Freyberg, V.C., four years before a Sub-Lieutenant, found himself holding a front of 4,000 yards with elements of four different divisions, and covered by the remnants of two divisional artilleries that had drifted back with the line. Neuve Eglise was lost, and Bailleul and Méteren; and under the intense pressure the front bent backwards. But it did not break. When on the 17th eight German divisions—seven of them fresh—were violently repulsed in their attack on the famous hill of Kemmel, the crisis of the Battle of the Lys was over. The orders of the Commander had been strictly and faithfully fulfilled.

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Even before the beginning of the Battle of the Lys, Sir Douglas Haig had convinced himself that Ludendorff meant to make a dead-set at the British Army. He accordingly appealed to Foch for aid.



To/All ranks of the British Forces in France

Three weeks ago today the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a 50 mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Channel ports and destroy the British Army.

Despite of throwing already 106 Divisions into the battle and suffering enduring the most reckless sacrifice of human life, he has as yet made little progress towards his goal.

We owe this to the determined fighting self sacrifice of our troops. Words fail me to express the admiration which I feel for the splendid resistance offered by all ranks of our Army under the most trying circumstances.

Many amongst us now are ~~unwilling~~ <sup>unwilling</sup> tired. To these I would say that Victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest. The French army is moving steadily & in great force to our support. ....

There is no other course open to us but to fight it out! Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With no backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause each one of you must fight on to the end. The safety of our Homes and the Freedom of mankind alike depends upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment. But ~~in the end~~ <sup>in the end</sup> ~~the British Empire~~ <sup>the British Empire</sup> ~~will win~~ <sup>will win</sup> the end. -

Thursday  
11 April 1918 }

D. Haig. Gen.

He asked the Generalissimo to take without delay one of the three following courses, viz.—

'(1) To open an offensive in the next five or six days with the French armies on a scale sufficient to attract the enemy's reserves, or

'(2) To relieve the British troops south of the Somme (a total of four divisions), or

'(3) To place a group of four French divisions in the neighbourhood of St. Pol as a reserve to the British front.'

He wrote again on the 10th after the battle had begun that the—

'enemy would without a doubt continue to strike against his troops until they were exhausted. It was vital that the French Army should take immediate steps to relieve some part of the British Front and take an active share in the battle.'

He renewed his solicitations on the 11th and on the 14th. Finally on the 15th he recorded his—

'opinion that the arrangements made by the Generalissimo were insufficient to meet the military situation.'

In order to press his demands with greater insistency, and withal to maintain good relations with the Supreme Commander, Haig, as early as April 10, had taken General Du Cane, who was actually commanding the XVth British Corps in full battle on the Lys, and sent him to reside at Foch's headquarters as a High 'Go-between' or Liaison Officer.

These requests were intensely painful to Foch. His primary endeavour was to gather and husband his reserves. The control exercised over the reserves was, he considered, the main function of a Commander on the defensive. Ten British divisions had already on account of their losses had to be reduced to cadre, and their survivors used as reinforcements for the rest. When could these divisions, he asked, be reconstituted? Could not the British when the crisis of the battle was over start a 'roulement' of tired British divisions to quiet parts of the French front? These counter requests ill accorded with the desperate struggle in which the British were involved. Painful differences developed at a conference held at Abbeville on April 14 between Foch and Haig, at which Lord Milner was present. Foch took the view that 'la bataille du Nord,' as he called it, was dying down, and that his reserves were suitably placed to intervene either in the Flanders battle or in the battle of Arras-Amiens-Montdidier, which he expected would be renewed at any moment. His attitude excited the resentment of the British representatives,

and no agreement was reached. He had seen the 1st British Army Corps fight at Ypres in 1914; and the impression that British troops would stand any test if resolutely called upon was indelible.

It was no doubt the duty of Foch to hoard his reserves and to extort the fullest effort from every part of the Allied armies; but he was at least premature in his judgment that 'the battle in the North was dying down,' nor had he any right to count upon the intense resistance which was in the event forthcoming from the desperately pressed British troops. Foch's doctrine of never relieving troops during a battle may apply to a battle of two or three days; but struggles prolonged over weeks do not admit of such rules. Divisions after a certain point, if not relieved, simply disappear through slaughter and intermingling with the reinforcements who are sent to sustain them; and the individual survivors of many days of ceaseless peril, horror and concussion become numb and lifeless, even though unscathed by steel.

The British, Government and Headquarters alike, upon whose initiative Foch had just been raised to the supreme control, were already distrustful of the use he would make of his power. It must be conceded however that Foch was vindicated by the event, for the British Armies weathered the storm practically unaided and the German impulsion gradually died away.

Slowly and reluctantly Foch was compelled to part with a small portion of his reserves, and on April 18 a detachment from the French Army of the North (D.A.N.) consisting of five infantry and three cavalry divisions was formed to take over the front Bailleul-Wytschaete. These troops however, even after they arrived on the scene, only gradually came into the line. In the end this French force was raised to nine infantry divisions. But before then the crisis had passed.

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We must descend from the immortal events of the battlefield to the thread of personal narrative which binds together this account. To many in the official circle the series of great battles which had filled these weeks presented the impression of one long frenzy. Men bent to their daily tasks for comfort. But my work kept me so closely in touch with the Army and its Chiefs that I could not fail to comprehend to some extent the meaning and proportion of individual events. For all the criticisms I had made and all the convictions I held about the Somme and Passchendaele, my heart went out to the Commander-in-Chief as he bore the trial with superb and invincible determination. On the night of the 12th I telegraphed: 'I cannot resist sending you

a message of sympathy and sincere admiration for the magnificent defence which you are making day after day, and of profound confidence in the result.' To which he replied: 'Heartiest thanks for your friendly telegram. Army is in a most determined mood and good spirits. Your old division under Tudor has been doing wonders. Many thanks for the splendid assistance given by your Department.'

Certainly everything in the Munitions sphere was moving forward with smooth celerity. Our organization passed the guns, ammunition, tanks and stores of all kinds to the Chief of the Artillery (General Birch), the Quartermaster-General (General Travers-Clarke), the Tank Corps and other authorities at Headquarters; and I was myself in personal touch with each of them. Through the united effort of all engaged in the supply of the Army it can truthfully be said they lacked nothing. Indeed the incredible efforts of all classes serving under the Ministry more than met the extraordinary strain. The faster material was lost, destroyed or expended, the faster it was replaced and the larger grew the surpluses in the workshops. In our main Tank factory in Birmingham the workers had achieved outputs in excess of all promises and also of the immediate reception capacity of the Tank Headquarters. Seeing the precious weapons multiplying in the yards, the men began to ask questions; and on April 17 I telegraphed to Mr. Dudley Docker:

'Express again to all hands my satisfaction at the admirable deliveries. Tell them confidentially, not for publication, that the losses of Tanks have been larger than previously reported, but that they have exacted a heavy toll from the Germans in many cases and helped our Infantry notably. Explain to them that during the uncertainty of the battle and its intense fierceness, it is not possible for the Tank Corps to take deliveries regularly. The roads are congested, depots are moving, everyone is involved in the fight. When the lull comes, there will be a general refitting; and that is the moment for which we must have ready the largest possible numbers. I am watching for this moment very carefully. They must not be put off their efforts if Tanks accumulate temporarily. The Army is fighting for its life, and we are standing by to put new weapons in their hands the very instant they turn to us. Let there be no misunderstanding therefore, but only confidence and full steam ahead.'

We had by this time completed the replacement of the material lost in the retreat of the Fifth Army without arresting the ascending scale of our current deliveries; and at the end of April

His Majesty was pleased to authorize the following message to our two and a half million workers:

'The Minister of Munitions has received the King's commands to convey to the officials of the Ministry, to the employers and to the munition workers throughout the country, both men and women, His Majesty's high approval of the exertions made during this critical time and his satisfaction at the remarkable results achieved. The King has learned from the Military Authorities that practically all the losses and expenditure of munitions during the battle have already been made good without any undue depletion of normal reserves, out of the resources which had been held in readiness, and by the additional effort which has been made. There are now actually more serviceable guns, machine guns, and aeroplanes with the British Armies in the field than there were on the eve of the German attack. The other supplies of all kinds are forthcoming in abundance. The King has commanded the Minister of Munitions to express his great pleasure to the workers and all engaged in this vital task. Travelling constantly about the country with the Queen from one munition centre to another, the King has had ample opportunity of witnessing the strenuous efforts which are being made by the men, and certainly not less by the women, to keep the soldiers who are fighting supplied with all they need, and also of admiring the organizing ability displayed in so many ways and on so great a scale. The King is deeply impressed by the fact that much-needed holidays should have been cheerfully given up, and additional exertions made, at a time when many severe food restrictions had come into force, and that in spite of large numbers of munition workers having left the workshops for the Army during the last six months, the outputs of every kind should not only have been maintained but steadily increased. Accordingly the King has directed the Minister to convey His Majesty's thanks to all concerned.'

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But the continuance of the battle, the power of the enemy and the obvious jeopardy in which our Army stood forced most grave reflections. Suppose the Germans continued tearing at our throats with all their might, suppose they shook the life out of our Army, suppose the straining front broke or was swept back by an inexorable tide! There were at any rate 'the water lines,' The advanced line ran from Dunkirk back to the second or main line. This ran along the stream of the Aa from Gravelines through St. Omer to St. Venant. A vast amount of

work had been done upon it. It was called 'the water line' on account of the great part which inundations could be made to play in its defence. This line would shorten the front and be a substantial relief, but it meant the loss of Dunkirk and the continuous bombardment of Calais. Both these ports played a notable part in the reception of our supplies, and far-reaching checks and complications would follow on their loss.

Even darker possibilities were afoot. Suppose we had to choose between giving up the Channel ports or being separated from the mass of the French armies! In the former case all our best and closest communications would be destroyed. We should have to rely entirely on Havre till other bases could be developed. All our programmes would vanish at a stroke. I was deeply concerned that this issue should be calmly probed before it actually came upon us. I therefore examined it in the following note which I sent to Sir Henry Wilson and the War Cabinet:

*To the War Cabinet.*

*Very Secret.*

#### A NOTE ON CERTAIN HYPOTHETICAL CONTINGENCIES.

*April 18, 1918.*

1. If the German offensive continues to prosper, a vital question will be raised, viz., *whether we should let go our left hand or our right*. All the movements of stores, munitions, and depots which are now taking place are affected and ought to be governed by this decision. It is imperative therefore to face the situation in advance and have a clear and profoundly considered view.

2. It is possible that we shall not have a free choice. The course of the German offensive may decide the issue irrespective of our wishes. If they succeeded in an attack along the coast, which made us let go our left hand from the Channel ports one after another, we should be forced to pivot by our right, and would finish up with our left near Abbeville and our right hand clasping the French. If, on the other hand, the enemy succeeded in cutting the British army from the French by an attack through Amiens towards Abbeville, we should find ourselves in a Torres Vedras position covering Calais and Boulogne. Now, which of these two do we dislike most? It is very important to decide, because by our dispositions and exertions we shall be able to influence, and may be able to determine, how the matter shall be settled.

3. To form a reasonable opinion, the first thing to do is to look—not at the map of the existing battleground, but at the map of France as a whole. It then immediately appears what a very small portion of France is involved in the present

and threatened invasion. It is evident that however important the Channel ports and Flanders may be, they and all the ground we hold are only a fragment of the country and nation we are defending, and on whose continued resistance the future of the land war depends.

4. The next thing is to consider what strategic developments would best suit the enemy. I say '*strategic*' as apart from the fortune of the battlefield. Of course the break-up of a whole army on the battleground is a short cut to strategic success—is indeed the end at which all strategy aims. But assuming—which is reasonable—there is no such collapse of our army, and that at the worst we make an orderly retirement, presenting a steady front and continuing to fight, what is the best strategy for the Germans to pursue? Which hand would they like us to let go—our right or our left?

5. If the Germans could succeed in sweeping us from the Channel ports and capturing Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne, they would gain all those very great advantages which have so often been explained. They can command the Straits of Dover, close the Port of London to all except northabout traffic, render Dover Harbour uncomfortable, bombard a large part of Kent and Sussex, and deprive our armies of their nearest and most convenient bases. But they would remain confronted by the mass of the still unbeaten British and French armies along a line from the neighbourhood of Abbeville so much shortened that, even with greatly reduced forces, it could be solidly held. And behind these armies would be the whole of France open for dilatory retirement or manœuvre. Until those armies were forced to lay down their arms the land war would not be ended. If France wished to make peace, the facilities of retreat open to the British in several directions to the sea or to neutral territory would afford bargaining power to make a military convention providing for the repatriation of that army; and France would be bound to insist on that, even at territorial loss to herself. Therefore, great as are the advantages which Germany would gain by the conquest of the Channel ports, there would be no reason why the war could not be indefinitely prolonged after their loss, provided the French and British armies remained united.

6. If on the other hand the Germans divide the British and French armies from each other at Abbeville, forcing us to let go our right hand and shut ourselves up in a Torres Vedras, they will have the following choice open to them, viz.: whether to wire in and so mask the British and throw their whole force against the French and Paris, or alternatively to hold the French in check while they drive the British into the sea. What

would their choice be? What was it at the beginning of the war? Did they not absolutely disdain the Channel Ports while there was a chance of taking Paris and smashing the main army? Had we any difficulty in deciding, when it came to the pinch in those days, whether our—then little—army should cover the Channel ports, or hold on firmly to the French and fight the main battle out in their company?

7. Although the British army thrown back on the Channel ports might be seriously weakened, yet to drive it into the sea, or to destroy it in its entrenchments, would require an enormous effort. For the Germans to lay siege to such an army, with the almost intact French army striking at their backs, would seem to be an unwise proceeding. '*Frappez la masse*' is a maxim to which the Germans have always given an understanding allegiance. And that would be their shortest road to end the war. It therefore seems probable that they would leave the weakened and exhausted British army cooped up in its lines around the Channel ports, and try the main conclusion with the French army. On the morrow of such a victory over the French the British army would be at their disposal. They could deal with it at their convenience.

All this appears to follow the elementary lines: Divide the enemy's forces into two parts: hold off the weaker part while you beat the stronger: the weaker then is at your mercy.

8. Do not all these considerations go to show that the vital and supreme need is for us to keep connection with the French? Does not experience generally show that armies which get separated from the main army are disposed of at leisure? Is not the sound rule to stand together, retire together, turn together, and strike together, as we did at the Marne? What would have been the position of a British army which, after Mons, had retreated on the Channel ports, if in its absence the battle of the Marne had been lost by the French? How long would the Belgian army have held out if they had been cut off in Antwerp? What happened to the Roumanian army once it was isolated?

9. To sum up: the choice in the hypothetical circumstances now being examined presents itself as follows: (1) To let go the left hand, lose the Channel ports, keep contact with the French, save our army, and continue the land war indefinitely; or (2) to let go the right hand, lose contact with the French, watch them being defeated, then be driven into the sea ourselves, and lose the Channel ports after all.

10. Happily these bleak alternatives are not yet before us, and there are good hopes they will never be. But it is necessary



that the question should be promptly examined with the fullest knowledge of the capacities of the various French ports and of the strength of the armies which could be based on each of them.

Wilson replied: 'I agree, as you know, and have asked the Admiralty to get out a paper on their side of the question.'

This issue was put to Foch at the meeting of the Supreme War Council which met at Abbeville on May 1 and 2. Both Wilson and Haig felt that a decision from the Supreme Commander was necessary in order that precautionary preparations could be made. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff persuaded the representatives of the British Government to press insistently for an answer. The utmost that Foch could be induced to admit was that it was more important to retain touch between the two armies than to retain possession of the Channel Ports. But he returned resolutely to his main contention: 'I mean to fight for both. The question, therefore, cannot arise until I am beaten. I will never give up either. *Ni l'un ni l'autre. Cramponnez partout.*' He hazarded a great deal upon the endurance of the British Army. But he was not disappointed.

On the 25th an unlucky event occurred. The French divisions which from the 18th onwards had deployed behind our front, had taken over a portion of the line, which they held in strength with divisional fronts of no more than 3,000 yards. Included in this sector, the French 28th Division held the invaluable height of Scherpenberg and Kemmel, the latter defended by one battalion of the 99th regiment. At dawn the Germans concentrated upon the hill and the trenches round its foot a most astonishing storm of high explosive and gas shells from cannon and *minenwerfer*. It is said that the French masks were only partially proof against the gas. Whatever the cause, the French troops on either side of the hill, after repulsing three infantry attacks, and sustaining heavy losses, gave way and were streaming back by seven o'clock in the morning. Their retirement left the troops on the summit, including some of our own trench-mortar batteries, to be cut off. A similar fate overwhelmed the British brigade who were holding the trenches on the French left. They were rolled up from the flank, and none escaped death or captivity. The disaster might have taken a still worse turn but for the promptitude with which the Highland Brigade next in succession threw back its right and formed a defensive flank.

There is no doubt that the relations between the French and British commands during the battle period which began on March 21 were not remarkable for a high appreciation of each other's military qualities. The French staff considered that the

British had failed and caused a great disaster on the common front, and they openly expressed the opinion that the quality of the British troops at this time was mediocre. The British, on the other hand, felt that the help given under a terrific strain had been both thin and slow, and that the entry of French relieving divisions into the battle was nearly always followed by further retirements. Instances are given by Colonel Boraston of joint attacks which miscarried through the French divisions not being set in motion, although their British comrades were already committed.

He also records a curious incident of which I was myself a witness. At about ten o'clock on April 29 I was breakfasting with Sir Douglas Haig. Sir Herbert Lawrence, his Chief of the Staff, and two or three Aides-de-Camp were present. The Commander-in-Chief had just sat down to his coffee when the following message was put in his hand: 'G.O.C. 39th French Division reports that there is no doubt but that the enemy holds Mont Rouge and Mont Vidaigne. Troops on right of Scherpenberg badly cut up. . . . Enemy reported to be pushing between the Scherpenberg and Mont Rouge.' Simultaneously there arrived from Plumer a confirmatory message requesting the Chief of the Staff to come at once to the Headquarters of the Second Army. No Reserves of any kind were available and the news if true involved the grim issue discussed in my Memorandum of the 18th. The room was rapidly emptied. Haig disappeared into his office observing, 'The situation is never so bad or so good as first reports indicate': and Lawrence vanished in a motor-car.

I thought I would go and see for myself what was happening, and accordingly I motored to the area of Sir Alexander Godley's Corps, which was the nearest to the reported break-through. A violent cannonade loaded the air; but at the Corps Headquarters faces were beaming. The French Commander had telephoned that it was all a mistake and that nothing of importance was occurring. Such accidents from time to time are inevitable. But this is an illustration of the tension under which both the French and British leaders were living in these very hard times.

However, the worst was over for the British Headquarters though they did not know it, and the rest of the war with all its slaughters and exertions contained for them only hopes and triumphs. The capture of Mount Kemmel was the last effort of the Germans in this battle. It is astounding that after having gained so great a prize at so high a cost they did not use it. The decision was Ludendorff's. The war diaries and archives of the German Fourth Army for the period April 9-30, captured by the French, show that so far from urging the Army Staff to press on to victory, it was Ludendorff who suggested that they stand fast

and prepare to meet a British counterstroke. 'In view of the solidarity of the defence,' he wrote, 'it should be considered whether the attack should be interrupted or continued.' To this General von Lossberg, Chief of the Fourth Army Staff, replied that 'our troops encountered everywhere in the field of attack a very solid defence, well distributed in depth and particularly difficult to overcome on account of the numerous machine-gun nests. . . . With the forces at present at our disposal the operation offers no chance of success. Better interrupt it.' And Ludendorff approved. The stubborn defence had succeeded at the moment when it had sustained its most dangerous wound.

So ended the most fierce and intense grapple of the British and Germans. For forty days, from March 21 to the end of April, the main strength of Germany had been ceaselessly devoted to the battery and destruction of the British Army. One hundred and twenty German Divisions had repeatedly assaulted 58 British, piercing the front, gaining great successes and capturing more than a thousand cannon, and seventy or eighty thousand prisoners. During these forty days the British Army had lost in officers 2,161 killed, 8,619 wounded, and 4,023 missing or prisoners: and of other ranks 25,967 killed, 172,719 wounded, and 89,380 missing or prisoners: a total loss of 14,803 officers and 288,066 men.<sup>1</sup> This was more than one-quarter of the whole number of British fighting troops under Sir Douglas Haig's command on March 21. But these terrible losses concentrated in so short a period on a relatively small military organism had not quenched its life-force. No vital position had been wrested from its grip. No despondency had overwhelmed the troops or their leaders. The machine continued to function, and the men continued to fight. Doggedly and dauntlessly they fought without a doubt that whatever their own fate, Britain would come victoriously through as she had always done before. By their stubborn and skilful resistance at every point, by numberless small parties fighting unchronicled till they were blotted out, the British inflicted upon the Germans losses even greater than those they themselves endured, losses irreparable at this period in the war, losses which broke the supreme German effort for victory at the outset, and rang the knell of doom in the ears of the overwrought German people. There fell of the Germans against the British in these same forty days, 3,075 officers killed, 9,305 wounded, and 427 missing or prisoners; and 53,564 other ranks killed, 242,881 wounded and 39,517 missing or prisoners; a total of 12,807 officers and 335,962 men. An advancing army always gathers the prisoners and missing on a scale far exceeding its retreating opponent. These cut off units are the heavy price of retirement, and they are a

<sup>1</sup> *Military Effort*, p. 362.

permanent loss to the defenders. But if—under these reserves—the missing and prisoners are deducted from each side, the fact emerges that the British shot 308,825 Germans during these battles at a cost of 209,466 ; or briefly three Germans shot for every two British.

It was now to be the turn of our Ally. The flail under which we had suffered was soon to be uplifted against the French. If we had known beforehand what their ordeal was to be, we should have been thankful they had nursed and guarded their remaining strength to face it.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE SURPRISE OF THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

Dwindling German Objectives—Foch and Strategic Proportion—Disposition of the Allied Reserve—The Chemin des Dames—The First Warning—Battle of May 27—The American Arrival—Relations between British and French—Paris and its Workshops—Improved Defence System—The Battle of Noyon—Alteration of the Strategic and Numerical Balances—Foch's Personal Position—A General Survey—The Past—The Present—The Future—The Question.

AT the end of April when the battle in the north died down Ludendorff, finding too many troops in front of him, looked elsewhere. 'The most favourable operation in itself,' he writes,<sup>1</sup> 'was to continue the attack on the English Army at Ypres and Baillcul. . . . Before we could attack here again, the enemy must become weaker and our communications must be improved.' He had thus resigned all the decisive strategic objects for which the German armies had been fighting since March 21. He had first abandoned the great roll-up of the British line from Arras northwards and the general destruction of the British armies, in favour of the more definite but still vital aim of taking Amiens and dividing the British from the French armies. Arrested in this, he had struck in the north to draw British reserves from the Amiens battlefield. But the Battle of the Lys, begun as a diversion, had offered the lesser yet still enormous prize of the northern Channel ports. Now he must abandon that; and his strategic ambition, already thrice contracted, must henceforward sink to an altogether lower plane. The fourth German offensive battle of 1918 was to a large extent a mere bid for a local victory, and apart from its usefulness in diverting Allied troops from the fateful fronts, offered no direct deadly strategic possibilities.

Marshal Foch saw with unerring eye the grand and simple proportion of events. Not deceived by the vast mass of frightfully important but irrelevant considerations which obscured the primary issues, he ranged the strategic necessities of the Allied armies in their true order. Of these the first beyond compare was the union of the French and British armies; second, the preservation of the Channel ports; and third, though in a less decisive sphere, the defence of Paris. Pétain on the other hand showed on more than one occasion that his valuations were

<sup>1</sup> *My War Memories*, p. 615.

different. His attitude on the night of March 24, which precipitated the Doullens Conference, proves that he would have rated the loss of Paris as a greater misfortune than the severing of the connection between the French and British armies. We shall see later a still more glaring example of this error, which in so accomplished a soldier can only be attributed to the intrusion of sentiment. Paris could have been occupied by the Germans in June, 1918, without preventing the collapse of the Central Empires in November. But the loss of the Channel ports and the consequent halving of the British military effort would have meant another year of war; and the severance of the British and French armies might easily have led to their total and final defeat. Mercifully the good sense of Foch pierced through the fog of false appearances. From the moment when he obtained the supreme command, he steadily massed the reserves, in full harmony with the British view, to safeguard the junction of the British and French armies. And behind him, with equal comprehension, Clémenceau when the need came declared: 'I shall fight in front of Paris. I shall fight in Paris. I shall fight behind Paris.' Thus these great men were able to exalt their minds above the dearest temptations of their hearts, and thus we found the path to safety by discerning the beacons of truth.

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It followed from Foch's decision to gather the reserves in Flanders and between Compiègne and Amiens that dangerous denudations must be accepted on other important parts of the front. The movement northwards of so many French divisions was viewed with deep anxiety by Pétain and the French Army Headquarters. Pétain indeed made a strenuous effort to retain the last instalment. But Foch insisted. Thus Ludendorff found, when the Battle of the Lys ended in deadlock, that it was not open to him to renew the battle of Amiens. He was already committed to two great bulges which he had conquered at the cost of heavy drafts upon the superior reserves he had gathered for the campaign. In neither could he advance in face of the strength against him, and from both he was unwilling to retire lest he should shatter the glittering but, as he knew well, already brittle confidence of Germany. Each of these bulges had its special disadvantages for the German troops. In the Somme region they were condemned to dwell amid their own devastations, and with communications which although improved, made the mounting of a first-class offensive impossible. In the Bailleul salient the conditions were far worse. The scale was smaller, but for this very reason the discomfort was more intense. The whole of the conquered ground was commanded by the encircling British

artillery. And this artillery, fed with unlimited ammunition and fresh guns, raked and swept the German salient night and day from three quarters of the compass. In this cauldron nearly twenty German divisions must be constantly maintained at a cost which melted the reserves apace.

It must have been with darkening misgivings that Ludendorff selected the point of his next attack. Outwardly all seemed to be going well. Actually all had miscarried. But the consolation of spectacular vengeance yet remained. Immense resources were still in hand. A dazzling victory could yet be won which, though barren in consequences, would still preserve the illusion of increasing success. As early as April 17 the Crown Prince's Army group was ordered urgently to prepare an offensive on the Chemin des Dames, with the object of breaking through between Soissons and Rheims. The arrangements were made with the customary thoroughness and science and with unexampled secrecy. The Seventh and First German Armies assembled twenty-nine divisions for the battle. No less than 1,158 batteries were deployed, and the moment was fixed for 2 a.m. on May 27.

Foch knew as well as Pétain the forfeits to which his wise dispositions exposed the French armies, and both Generals were during the whole of May unable to divine where the blow would fall. Blame has been attributed to the staff of the French Sixth Army. The choleric temperament of its Commander General Duchêne had discouraged and estranged his subordinates, and the machine worked with friction.<sup>1</sup> At this time above all others efforts should have been made, without regard to losses, to pierce the enemy's screen by sudden raids, now here now there, and gain the indispensable information. But nothing of this kind was done successfully either by the Sixth Army or elsewhere along the French front. Four French divisions were in line on the Chemin des Dames, with four more in reserve behind the Aisne. On their right was the Ninth British Army Corps under Sir Alexander Hamilton Gordon, comprising three divisions in the line (the 21st, 8th and 50th), also the 25th Division in reserve, all shockingly mutilated in the northern battle, and sent at Foch's earnest desire to what was stated by the French to be the quietest sector of the front in order to refit and train their recruits. In reply to formal warnings from the British General Headquarters that an attack had been mounted against the Aisne front, the French Sixth Army Staff stated on the morning of May 25: 'In our opinion there are no indications that the enemy has made preparations that would enable him to attack to-morrow.'

<sup>1</sup> Une humeur de dogue, un grondement perpétuel, un orage de rebuffades, tout de suite les gros mots à la bouche, sans raison.—Pierrefeu, *G.Q.G. Secteur I*, Vol. II, p. 178.

What followed is exciting. At daybreak on the 26th two German prisoners were taken by the French. One was a private and the other an *officier-aspirant*, belonging to different regiments of Jäger. On the way to Divisional Headquarters their captors entered into conversation with them. The private said there was going to be an attack; the officer contradicted him. Arrived at the Army Corps Intelligence centre the prisoners were examined separately. The officer, questioned first, was voluble, and declared that the Germans had no intention of making an offensive on this front. The interrogation of the private followed. He said that the soldiers believed that they would attack that night or the following night. He was not sure of the date. Pressed, he said that cartridges and grenades had already been distributed, but not the field rations. He had seen the previous day near his billets soldiers belonging to Guards regiments. He knew no more. The officer was then recalled. He was told that the laws of war had in no way forced him to speak, but that he had volunteered statements for which he would be held responsible. To give false information was the act of a spy. On this he became visibly perturbed, and under pressure gave in the end the most complete details of the attack which impended the next day. It was already three o'clock in the afternoon of the 26th. The alarm was given, and the troops available took up their battle positions.

Pierrefeu has described the terrible hours which Pétain and the French Headquarters Staff now endured far away at Provins.<sup>1</sup> They knew that an immense disaster was certain. They knew that no reinforcements could reach the scene for several days, and thereafter for a still longer period only at the rate of two divisions a day. Meanwhile there was nothing in human power that could be done. All through the night they sat in their silent offices, bowed under the blow about to fall and suffering another form of the tortures to which the troops were doomed. At one o'clock next morning the German barrage descended on a thirty-kilometre front, and three hours later eighteen divisions advanced upon the four French and three refitting British divisions. Although the troops on the ground were alert, the strategic surprise was complete and overwhelming.

'After three-and-a-half hours' artillery and trench-mortar preparation,' says the Crown Prince,<sup>2</sup> 'the divisions surged forward against the Chemin des Dames. . . . The small enemy force holding the position, six French and three English trench divisions, were overrun and the Chemin des Dames and the Aisne-Marne Canal reached in one swoop. As early as the

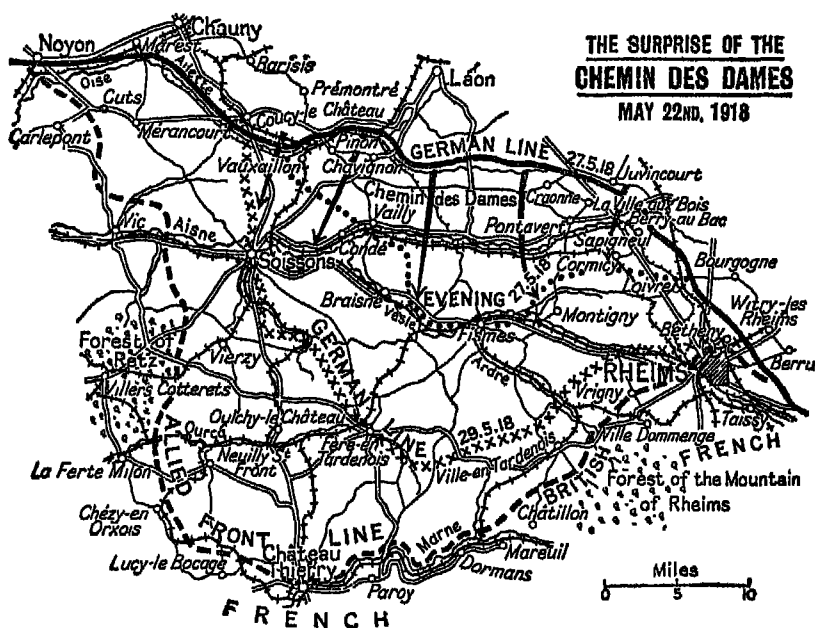
<sup>1</sup> G.Q.G. Section I, Vol. II, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> *My War Experiences*, p. 318.



afternoon our leading units were over the Aisne. By the evening the centre of the Third Army had already reached the Vesle on both sides of Fismes. A break-through with a depth of twenty kilometres had been attained in one day. The Aisne-Marne Canal was also crossed by the left wing of the Seventh Army.'

A most stubborn defence was made by the three British divisions which were in the line, and by the 25th Division almost immediately involved. On their right stood the 45th French-Algerian Division which, not being itself attacked, gave energetic



assistance. Hinging on this, the British line swung back under immense pressure on its front and with its left continually compromised. The retiring British found behind them fortunately the hilly and wooded country to the west of Reims, which helped the defence in a receding battle. The 19th British Division had also luckily arrived at Chalons for rest and recuperation, and on the fourth day they sustained the British line. The 21st Division was by then practically destroyed, and by June 1 the whole five British divisions were hardly equal to the full strength of one. All the troops bore themselves as on the Lys a month earlier.

Battalions were completely exterminated, and a large portion of the artillery perished with their guns upon the field. The French villagers in their ignorance and terror assailed the retreating troops with hostile demonstrations.

Meanwhile upon the British left the German punch had smashed right through. General Duchêne's staff delayed too long the destruction of the bridges across the Aisne, and most of them fell intact into the hands of the invaders. By June 2 Soissons had fallen and the Germans had reached the Marne at Château-Thierry.

Pierrefeu has described in a moving passage the next event. Now suddenly the roads between Provins and the front towards Meaux and towards Coulommiers began to be filled with endless streams of Americans. The impression made upon the hard-pressed French by this seemingly inexhaustible flood of gleaming youth in its first maturity of health and vigour was prodigious. None were under twenty, and few were over thirty. As crammed in their lorries they clattered along the roads, singing the songs of a new world at the tops of their voices, burning to reach the bloody field, the French Headquarters were thrilled with the impulse of new life. 'All felt,' he says, 'that they were present at the magical operation of the transfusion of blood. Life arrived in floods to reanimate the mangled body of a France bled white by the innumerable wounds of four years.' Indeed the reflection conformed with singular exactness to the fact. Half trained, half organized, with only their courage, their numbers and their magnificent youth behind their weapons, they were to buy their experience at a bitter price. But this they were quite ready to do.

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The misfortunes of the Battle of the Chemin des Dames had the remarkable effect of improving the relations between the British and French armies. After a surprise so glaring and a retreat of twenty kilometres in a single day—the record for all battles on the Western Front—the French were in no position to maintain the airs of superiority which they had been unable to conceal from the Italians after Caporetto or altogether from the British after the 21st of March. Up till the moment when they in their turn felt the force of a Ludendorff offensive, they had complacently assumed that the French Army contained the only troops who could really hold a front under modern conditions. These illusions had been swept away by the German scythe. The intensity of their common tribulations united the Allies more closely than ever. Moreover, the French command were deeply grieved at the destructive losses suffered by the five British divisions committed to their care for a period of recuperation.

They paid their tribute in generous and soldierly terms to the fighting achievements of these troops. The words of General Maistre, the Commander of the Group of Armies concerned, may be here transcribed: 'With a doggedness, permit me to say thoroughly English, submerged by the hostile flood, you have reconstituted without failing new units to carry on the struggle which have at last enabled us to form the dyke by which this deluge has been mastered. That achievement no Frenchman who was a witness will forget.'<sup>1</sup> The 2nd Devons and the 5th Battery of the Forty-fifth British Field Artillery Brigade were awarded the Croix de Guerre in consequence of their having fought until only the memory remained.

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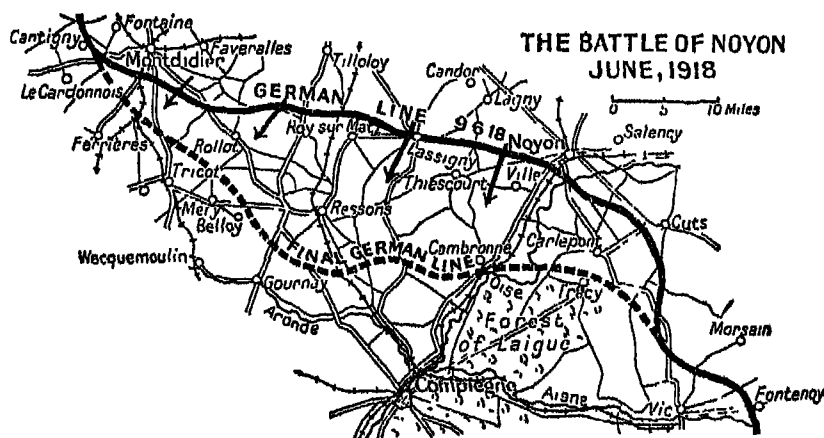
The advance of the Germans to Château-Thierry, barely a hundred kilometres from Paris, confronted me with problems almost as serious and quite as imminent as those which had glared at us during the Battle of the Lys. I was responsible among other things for the whole supply of aeroplanes and aviation material of all kinds. The Ministry of Munitions was a gigantic shop from which the Air Ministry ordered all they wanted. Under the incredible activities of Sir William Weir, then Secretary of State, the Air Force demands became staggering. We discovered that the French had a large surplus manufacturing capacity. I had therefore, in agreement with Loucheur, directed Sir Arthur Duckham to place enormous orders with them. The French factories on which we depended for an essential part of our programme were mostly grouped around Paris. The danger to the capital required elaborate plans for moving these establishments southwards in case of need, and at the same time a very nice decision whether and when to put them into operation. If we moved without cause, we interrupted production. If we tarried too long, we should not be able to get our machinery away. Paris was calm and even pleasant in these days of uncertainty. The long-range German cannon, which threw its shells about every half-hour, had effectively cleared away nearly all those who were not too busy nor too poor. The city was empty and agreeable by day, while by night there was nearly always the diversion of an air raid. The spirit of Clémenceau reigned throughout the capital. 'We are now giving ground, but we shall never surrender. We shall be victorious if the Public Authorities are equal to their task.'

Ludendorff had now made a third bulge in the Allied front. In all three the German troops were uncomfortable, their communications extremely inferior, and their general strategic

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, Vol. II.

## 1322 SURPRISE OF THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

position delicate. It seemed probable that they would try to bite off or beat in the French salient which jutted out between Montdidier and Château-Thierry as far as Noyon. The deep forest region about Villers-Cotterets and the fact that there was only a single line of railway for all the Germans in the Château-Thierry bulge, made an attack from an eastern direction unlikely. The front before Compiègne from Montdidier to Noyon was clearly the most interesting. M. Clémenceau had authorized and even urged me to go everywhere, see everything, and 'tell Lloyd George what we are doing.' Accordingly as the work of the Inter-Allied Munitions Conference which was then proceeding permitted, I visited the armies of Generals Humbert and Debeny, who awaited the expected shock. I knew both these Generals personally, and was still better acquainted with General Fayolle who commanded the Army Group. One could reach the front line from Paris in less than three hours, and I followed with the closest attention the improved methods of defence which the French were adopting. Nothing of consequence was now offered to the German opening bombardment. A strong picquet line of detached machine-gun nests, carefully concealed, was alone in



contact with the enemy. Behind these devoted troops, for whom an assault could only mean destruction, was a zone three or four thousand yards deep, in which only strong points were held by comparatively small forces. It was not until at least 7,000 yards separated them from the hostile batteries that the real resistance of the French Infantry and Artillery was prepared. When one

saw all the fortifications and devices, the masses of batteries and machine guns, with which the main line of defence bristled, and knew that this could not be subjected to heavy bombardment until the stubborn picquets far in front had been exterminated, it seemed difficult to believe that any troops in the world could carry the whole position from front to rear in a single day.

On the evening of June 8 I walked over the centre of the French line in front of Compiègne. The presage of battle was in the air. All the warnings had been given, and everyone was at his post. The day had been quiet, and the sweetness of the summer evening was undisturbed even by a cannon shot. Very calm and gallant, and even gay, were the French soldiers who awaited the new stroke of fate. By the next evening all the ground over which they had led me was in German hands, and most of those with whom I had talked were dead or prisoners.

Early on the morning of the 9th the Eighteenth German Army began what they have called the Battle of Noyon, and at the same time the Seventh German Army attacked south-west of Soissons. The whole of the threatened front was thus on fire. The severity of this onslaught lasted for two days only. The Germans penetrated to a depth of fifteen kilometres, and set their feet on the heights before Compiègne. But the methods of defence exacted a heavy toll, and a wise elasticity in the use of ground enabled the French to economize losses. From the 11th onwards Fayolle began to launch carefully prepared counter-attacks in great force, particularly in the direction of Méry. These continued throughout the 12th and 13th; but already on the 11th Ludendorff had felt the task beyond his power. 'In consequence,' he says, 'of the great accumulation of enemy troops G.H.Q. directed the Eighteenth Army to break off the attack on the 11th, in order to avoid casualties. It was quite evident that the attack commenced in the meantime by the Seventh Army south-west of Soissons would not get through. The action of the Eighteenth Army had not altered the strategical situation . . . nor had it provided any fresh tactical data.'

So far in all this year the Allies had experienced nothing but recoil. The martial might of Germany lay heavy on all. The sense of grappling with a monster of seemingly unfathomable resources and tireless strength, invulnerable—since slaughter even on the greatest scale was no deterrent—could not be excluded from the mind. No one hoped for a swift result. But the idea that the war could reach any end other than the total defeat of Germany was strictly excluded even from private conversation. All the dominant personalities were resolved to fight on to victory, and the soldiers with simple faith took this for granted. Says

<sup>1</sup> *My War Memories*, p. 634.

Ludendorff: 'It was certainly discouraging that our two great attacks had not forced a decision. That they had been victories was obvious. . . . The evil effect of disillusionment was doubled by the fact that we could not overcome it in our then state of mind.' But they were not victories: they were only placards. Of the five great battles which had been fought, the first three against the British had failed to achieve any one of the progressively diminishing strategic results at which they had aimed. The fourth against the French was a local victory, very spectacular but without strategic consequence; and the last, the Battle of Noyon, was a very decided arrest. The Supreme offensive was in slack water. The 11th of June on the French front had marked just such a milestone in the war as had the 12th of April with the British Army. On the German side, in spite of sensational triumphs, all was 'disillusionment.' Behind the Allied front, with all their bitter experiences, the foundation of confidence was solid.

These three months of ceaseless battle had indeed witnessed a profound alteration of the strategic balance. The main forces of Germany were now deeply committed. The sovereign element of surprise, without which no great offensive was possible, depended upon the power to have simultaneously in readiness on different parts of the front four or five attacks of the first magnitude. This had been the baffling factor to the Allies before the 21st of March. But most of these had now already been let off. The remaining possibilities open to Ludendorff were restricted and to a large extent defined. His reservoirs were low; ours were filling full.

The balance of numbers had turned heavily. The British had actually killed and wounded or captured nearly four hundred thousand Germans in the five weeks' grapple, while all their own losses in men and material had by the activities of their Government been more than replaced. Indeed our Army at the end of June was somewhat stronger than on the eve of the 21st of March. Divisions had been drawn from Italy, from Salonica and from Egypt. Masses of troops had been released from home by the War Office rising superior at long last to the absurd fear of invasion. Sedentary divisions of older men had been formed to hold the trench lines. When the time came they proved they could march as well as stand. Sir Douglas Haig was conscious of a continued accretion of strength; and as the event was to prove, he was able to measure it better than anyone else.

The resources of France, so prodigally spent at the beginning, so jealously husbanded in the later years, were sufficient for a final effort. And behind them the Americans gathered in tens of thousands day by day. By this date the British Marine alone,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 642.

military and merchant, had carried and convoyed to France, with scarcely any loss of life from enemy action, nearly three-quarters of a million American troops. All these facts justified confidence in the successful termination of the year's campaign, and that the next year would be decisive.

The personal position of Marshal Foch after the 27th of May was not however entirely unshaken. On him France fixed the prime responsibility of having diverted the French reserves to cover the juncture of the British and French armies. The appointment of a Generalissimo had only been carried in the face of serious and natural oppositions. The first fruits of 'unity of command' and of Foch's personal direction of the front had been a blazing disaster. Strong undercurrents ran of complaint and reproach. The British did not think they had been well treated in their intense trial. Moreover, there were reasonable grounds for misgiving. Unlike Haig or Pétain, Marshal Foch had not at his disposal the great machinery of a General Staff. He acted only through what he has pleasingly described as 'ma famille militaire,'—a small band of devoted officers who had throughout the war shared his varied fortunes. At their head stood a certain young General Weygand, alert, discreet and silent in manner, afterwards to become better known. Whether this extremely restricted circle would be able to inform their Chief upon the vast and innumerable masses of technical detail which must be mastered before the operations of great modern armies can be weighed and selected from among alternatives, was a question at that time without an answer. On this account also many doubts were entertained. Nevertheless Marshal Foch, building his house on the rock of strategic truth, possessed his soul in patience.

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During this period of hard tension the Imperial War Cabinet comprising the Prime Ministers of the Dominions was frequently in Session in London. Sir Henry Wilson one day in presenting to them an appreciation of the whole position went back to the beginning, and took occasion to refer to my work with him in the years before the war. This led me to prepare for the Dominion Ministers a short general survey of past, present and future as I saw them then. I print it as I wrote it. It is a record of that darkest hour which we are told precedes the dawn.

#### A NOTE ON THE WAR.

*To the Imperial War Cabinet.*

*June 22, 1918.*

1. Before the war the British military authorities forecasted

with accuracy what the German plan of campaign would be, and Sir Henry Wilson in particular, as early as August, 1911, unfolded to the Committee of Imperial Defence a completely true picture of the German attack in the West, through Belgium towards Paris, and also of the Russian weakness and tardy mobilization in the East. On the other hand, our military advisers took a far too sanguine view of the relative strength and efficiency of the French and German armies. On the outbreak of war, the overpowering need was to stem the German rush, first on Paris, and secondly on the Channel Ports, and no one could think of anything else on land till this was done. By the end of November, as the Chief of the Staff has explained, Paris and the Channel Ports were saved, and the German onslaught brought to a standstill. The first phase of the war, which may be called 'stemming the rush,' thus came to an end.

2. The second phase covered a period of 18 to 20 months, viz., from the end of 1914 to the Battle of the Somme in July, 1916. During the whole of this period the position in the West was that the Anglo-French armies were strong enough to hold the Germans, but not strong enough to attack them with any chance of piercing their fortified lines. The main theatre, *i.e.* the theatre where the main forces are gathered, ceased to be for the time being the decisive theatre, *i.e.* the theatre where an important decision can be obtained. These conditions were clearly recognized in the British Cabinet. They were disputed by both the British and French military authorities. The divergence of view arising from different estimates of forces and values led to the loss of opportunities which will never recur.

3. The politicians were in the main generally convinced that the deadlock in the West would continue until a great British army could be called into being, and equipped with a powerful artillery and plentiful munitions. They therefore immediately looked for other theatres in which our forces could gain decisive results in the interval. Two great operations, each involving the concerted action of our naval, military and diplomatic resources, presented themselves: first, the rallying of the group of small States at the north-western corner of Europe, thus turning the enemy's right flank, obtaining command of the Baltic, and forming contact with Russia in the north; or secondly, rallying the group of small States at the south-eastern corner of Europe, striking down Turkey before Germany could organize her, and establishing contact with Russia from the south. Of these two policies, the first was clearly the more difficult, and was



never perhaps possible, having regard to our resources. The second however was not only possible but easy of accomplishment if the proper measures had been taken. Turkey was isolated from Germany by the Balkan States. She was ill-organized and ill-prepared. She was menaced by Russia. We held better cards than the Germans in regard to every single one of the Balkan States. The partition of the Turkish Empire offered the means of satisfying every appetite. Lastly, the naval situation was entirely favourable. Our margins in the North Sea had been greatly increased since the declaration of war. The German submarines had not become formidable, and the destruction of Von Spee had completed the clearance of the German warships from the surface of the oceans. An amphibious operation to strike down Turkey before she could raise her head, and to unite the Balkan States against their natural foes, the Turkish and Austrian Empires, was well within the scope of the naval and military resources at our disposal, after providing an ample superiority over the Germans in the North Sea and sufficient forces to defend actively the front in France and Flanders. It was therefore towards the southern flank of the enemy's line, to Turkey and to the Balkans, that our operations were directed—but alas half-heartedly.

4. The natural tendency of the naval and military point of view is to confuse the main and the decisive theatres. Wherever the main part of the army or the main part of the fleet is assembled, always claims their partisanship.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the professional opinion of the navy grudged and resisted the employment at the Dardanelles of every unit, even the most worthless; and the professional opinion of the army delayed, grudged, and stinted the employment of every soldier and of every shell required for the Eastern campaign. These tendencies, which would have been overborne by success, became at the first check overpowering. The Eastern enterprise was therefore cast away, with consequences of measureless disaster.

Bulgaria, always the key of the Balkans, remained undecided while the fate of the Dardanelles hung in the balance. Her course was determined by the loss of the Battle of Suvla Bay. The destruction of Serbia followed immediately, and the destruction of Roumania a year later. Turkey was gripped and organized by the Germans, entailing great diversions of our forces to Egypt and Mesopotamia. Adding the loss involved by these diversions to the loss arising from the destruction of Serbia and Roumania, the paralysis of Greece, and the hostility of Bulgaria, our failure to prosecute the

<sup>1</sup> I have not corrected this war-time grammar, as the sense is clear.

Eastern enterprise successfully may well have equalled the addition of two million soldiers to the ranks of our enemies. Besides this we lost the means to succour and animate Russia by direct contact.

5. The third phase of the war supervenes upon the second. After the year 1915, there were no hopes of gaining any good results in Turkey or the Balkans. The Germans were everywhere in complete communication and control. In consequence, Allied armies large enough to achieve success in those theatres were too large for the carrying capacity of our seaborne tonnage. Moreover, the submarine had become formidable in the Mediterranean, and the military weakness of Russia was plainly apparent. Half the soldiers lost and half the shells fired in Artois in May, and at Loos and in Champagne in September, 1915, resolutely used, would have achieved for us the whole south-eastern theatre of war in that year; but in 1916 four times their number could not have retrieved the position. The extinction of other possibilities left France therefore the only theatre open to us.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile however a great British army had come into being, abundantly supplied with munitions. The third or as it may be called 'The Slogging Phase' then began. This lasted from the beginning of the Battle of the Somme, the 1st July, 1916, to the end of the Passchendaele attacks in November, 1917. During the whole of this period the British armies, sometimes alone and sometimes assisted by the French, were hurled almost continuously, or with the briefest intervals for recovery, in assaults upon the fortified German lines. I have personally always held the view that at no time in this period were we strong enough, in the absence of some entirely novel method of attack applied on a gigantic scale, *e.g.* tanks or gas, to break through the skilful German defence, reinforced as it always was, and still is, by the power of giving ground wherever necessary without serious consequence. Still, such was the heroic gallantry of the armies and the determination of their leaders, so powerful was the artillery of which they disposed, that the hope of victory and the sense of mastery were never quenched in the hearts of our troops until the mud deluge of Passchendaele.

The most hopeful climax of these operations was however probably reached at the end of the year 1916 in the later phases of the Battle of the Somme. At this time the enemy were at their greatest strain. They were weakened by their folly at

<sup>1</sup> I did not think it useful to discuss in this paper a surprise attack in 1916 by all the forces in the Mediterranean theatre upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. No one would have weighed it seriously at this time.

Verdun. They were attacked simultaneously by the British and French armies astride of the Somme. Brusiloff gained his great victories on the Austrian front, and Roumania plunged into the war. The exertions which the Germans made in this emergency should make us realize the strength of our foe. By dint of them they managed to reach the winter, striking down Roumania meanwhile.

6. The Germans did not feel themselves strong enough in the spring of 1917 to withstand the renewed onslaught of the British and French armies. They therefore ruptured the Anglo-French plans for combined action by suddenly withdrawing their line from the Somme battlefields almost to St. Quentin and Cambrai. They thus placed a broad belt of devastated country between them and their would-be assailants, and also between the British and French armies. By this manœuvre they avoided the kind of long-prepared accumulated blow they have struck at us this year, and only had to face through the rest of 1917 disconnected attacks by the British, and occasionally by the French. The campaign of 1917 therefore became very disastrous to us. Although each military episode, taken by itself, wore the aspect of a fine success, with captures of ground and guns and prisoners, in reality we were consuming our strength without any adequate result.

7. Late in the year a false naval argument played its part in swaying military policy. The harbours of Zeebrugge and Ostend were represented as being the source of the submarine warfare, and their capture or suppression was alleged to be vital. As a matter of fact, these harbours of course have never been and could never be the main base of submarine warfare. That has only been directed and can only be directed from the permanent naval bases of Germany in the estuaries of the Elbe, the Weser, and the Ems. Ostend and Zeebrugge were serious annoyances, but as objectives they were utterly inadequate to the sacrifices demanded of the army in order to secure the Flanders Coast. Moreover, the season of the year was advanced. The Russian collapse had taken place; nobody else was fighting; the numbers of the enemy on the front attacked were almost equal to our own; the direction of the attack was perceived and thoroughly prepared against by elaborate semi-permanent fortifications. In these circumstances the amazing efforts of the British armies could have no other result than to weaken themselves.

The incidental disaster which happened to Italy was not so harmful as it looked. Her renewed effort more than made up for the heavy losses sustained.

8. While our commanders were intent upon the battle and

in hopes of gaining successes in the nick of time, they do not seem to have realized the awful consequences of the collapse of Russia. But in November and December this apprehension grew with politicians and generals, both British and French. The flow of German divisions and batteries from Russia to the West was unceasing for many-months until finally a power had been accumulated which, after marking down every division of which we could dispose, left the enemy with a punching force of nearly fifty divisions. The enemy's military methods differ from our own. In attack the German uses Surprise, in defence he uses Concrete. Our defensive problem this year is far more difficult than that which the Germans solved successfully in 1917. On every occasion in 1917 (except at Cambrai) the Germans knew where the attack would fall. Every attack (except Cambrai) was indicated by several days' bombardment, apart from every evidence of ill-camouflaged preparation. Every German position was defended by lines of solid shell-proof structures sheltering machine guns, and ample reserves were held in rear to arrest a successful advance beyond the limits of our offensive barrage. Lastly, the Germans could always afford to give up some of the territory they overran so easily at the beginning of the war.

Our position this year has been very different. The initiative has passed completely to the enemy. His attack is mounted actually or in dummy over practically the whole battle-front, and besides we can never exclude his irruption at some quite unexpected point. We, on the other hand, have at least four places—Calais, Amiens, Paris, Verdun—which we regard as capital. The enemy can therefore ring the changes on a succession of vital points, before each one of which we have little or no ground to spare. Meanwhile the use of gas and smoke has given new facilities to the offensive, and our methods of fortifications are still primitive compared with those of the Germans.

In this dire situation nothing has saved us except the stamina of our armies and the physical difficulties of persevering in an offensive after a certain distance. The stubborn resistance which the enemy has encountered, the bloody repulses which in spite of his successes he has sustained on the greatest scale, and the resources in men and material which the threat of utter ruin has extorted from the Allies, have gone far to equalize the struggle. It is even probable that we shall end this campaign of agony and disaster in far better posture than we began it. But what are we going to do then?

9. This is the question to which I have been leading up. If I have tried to pick out as I see them the salient points in

the past, it is with the object of showing that there are now and in the immediate future just as vital decisions to be taken if we can only secure the necessary vision and command. It may be that the Imperial War Cabinet will be able to impart to the Allied conduct of the war that general design and true selection of vital objectives which we have never yet been able to obtain.

10. There are two perfectly simple things to do. They have long been staring us in the face. Everybody sees them, but they see so much else at the same time that nothing effective has yet been done: (1) Above all things reconstitute the fighting front in the East; (2) make a plan for an offensive battle in France in 1919, choosing the period of climax and subordinating, as far as pressure of circumstances will allow, every intervening event to that supreme purpose.

If we cannot reconstitute the fighting front against Germany in the East, no end can be discerned to the war. Vain will be all the sacrifices of the peoples and the armies. They will only tend to prolong the conflict into depths which cannot be plumbed. We must not take 'No' for an answer either from America or from Japan. We must compel events instead of acquiescing in their drift. Surely now when Czech divisions are in possession of large sections of the Siberian Railway and in danger of being done to death by the treacherous Bolsheviks, some effort to rescue them can be made? <sup>1</sup> Every man should ask himself each day whether he is not too readily accepting negative solutions. May we not assume that President Wilson will regard the rescue of the Czechs as an obligation of honour? Who can rescue them except the Japanese? . . .

11. Secondly, we must organize the offensive battle for 1919. It will be no use thinking about this in the winter when we may hope our present anxieties will be at an end. It will be too late then. Unless while we are fighting for our lives all this summer we can look ahead and plan for 1919, we shall be in the same melancholy position next year as we are this. In this war the initiative can only be seized as the result of plans made nearly a year ahead and through the successful overcoming of some great difficulty. Is it not possible at the present time to conceive and visualize a victorious offensive battle in the summer of 1919, to manufacture all the apparatus necessary to that battle, and to subordinate intervening arrange-

<sup>1</sup> Some of the Bohemian prisoners taken by Brusiloff in 1916 had been formed into a Czech Army Corps which fought with resolution against the Austrian Empire. The Russian revolution and the Bolshevik desertion of the Allied cause left these soldiers in a forlorn position, from which their discipline and firm political convictions ultimately extricated them.

ments, as far as daily needs will let us, to bringing about a situation favourable to that battle ? Do the means of beating the German armies in the West in 1919 exist ? Can the men be procured ? If so, the mechanisms can be prepared. We still have the time. Have we the will-power and the command ?

## CHAPTER XX

### THE UNFOUGHT CAMPAIGN

*'The God of the Bees is the future.'*

MAETERLINCK.

Two Practical Steps to Finality—Need of American Troops—General Pershing's Fine Decision—My Mission to Clémenceau—President Wilson's Valiant Response—Equipment of the American Armies—Mr. Stettinius—Mr. Baruch—Nitrates and Diplomacy—The American Artillery Problem—Its Solution—Cordial Co-operation—A 'Gentleman's Agreement'—Munition Workers' Unrest—The Coventry Strike—Château Verchocq—The Mechanical Battle—My Letter to General Harington—The Man-Power Problem 1918 and 1919—July and August Memoranda—The 10,000 Caterpillars—Foch's Endorsement—Future Hopes.

DURING these tremendous struggles, while the fate of the Channel ports and even of the union between the British and French armies hung in the balance, by far the greater part of my duties and thoughts lay in the future. Throughout the summer the Munitions Council worked for a campaign which, in God's mercy, was never fought. To make sure of victory in 1919 was an aim at once possible and imperative. Dominated by this conviction, I concentrated all time and thought that could be spared from day-to-day emergencies upon the task. I had neither the responsibility nor the power; but with such influence as I possessed I tried to turn British and Allied policy to two great practical steps: first, to bring American manhood into Europe on the largest scale as fast as possible; secondly, to devise the plan and prepare the apparatus of a mechanical battle of decisive magnitude. In this chapter, between the stemming of the German onslaught and the beginning of the brilliant period which all unknown was now approaching, I shall endeavour to give the reader some account of both these measures.

I had long been disappointed at the slow rate at which American troops were being transported across the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> I did not believe that the resources either of the Admiralty or of the British Mercantile Marine were being used to the full. I always held that first importance should be assigned to the transportation of American soldiers, and that all the formidable difficulties of their training, equipment and supply could be

<sup>1</sup> See page 1181. Memorandum of Oct. 21, 1917.

surmounted later in their turn. A week before Ludendorff struck his first blow I had minuted to the War Cabinet as follows:—

AMERICA AND SHIPPING.

March 14, 1918.

I trust that the War Cabinet will not allow themselves to be deflected by the serious difficulties which no doubt exist from their resolve to transport the additional American divisions in British ships to Europe. The infantry of the British Army has been reduced by 25%, or approximately 170 battalions. The addition of 72 American battalions will still leave that Army substantially smaller than it was last year, and therefore well within the compass of our cross-channel transportation and railway system on the British Front.

The immense political and military advantages of drawing American manhood into the war, and of thus partially filling the gap caused by the diminution of our own forces, ought to outweigh all other considerations and make us ready to submit to the further reduction in food, civil imports and munitions rather than lose the benefit which should now be reached. It is emphatically a case where the difficulties ought to be surmounted and mastered, and not recoiled from as soon as they present themselves. A true sense of relative values at the present time would assign supreme priority to the rapid augmentation by every conceivable means of the numbers of American soldiers in France.

Quite apart from the imperious military need, the intermingling of British and American units on the field of battle and their endurance of losses and suffering together may exert an immeasurable effect upon the future destiny of the English-speaking peoples, and will afford us perhaps the only guarantee of safety if Germany emerges stronger from the War than she entered it.

The Prime Minister had from the beginning formed these general views independently. He used all his powers at every stage to give effect to them. He had already arranged for 72 American battalions to be attached in the first instance to British Units. The intense peril in which we seemed to stand after the Twenty-first of March spurred him to renewed exertions, and at the same time rendered those exertions fruitful. Confronted with the extreme crisis, General Pershing and General Bliss presented themselves to General Foch on March 28 and spontaneously, in the finest manner, placed the whole of their resources in France for the time being at his disposal. Their plans for the development of the great American Army would be subordinated



to the emergency wherever necessary. The American divisions, or battalions if need be, would enter the line forthwith in spite of their training and organization being incomplete. This decision was at the true height of circumstances, and in itself went far to repair the injuries of Ludendorff's inroad.

As soon as I was able to report that all measures to make good the losses of material had been taken and would be immediately effective, the Prime Minister sent me again to France upon a somewhat delicate mission. On the morning of March 28 I started for Paris with instructions to see Clémenteau and if possible Foch, and find out whether the French were willing to make a vigorous attack on the Southern flank of the battlefields to take some of the pressure off our armies. Such a direct but irregular inquiry might well have encountered a rebuff. Arrived in Paris, I therefore asked our Liaison Officer, General Sackville-West, to explain matters to Clémenteau. But the Tiger brushed all formalities aside. We would start together for the front, he said, at 8 o'clock the next morning. We would visit Foch at Beauvais, Rawlinson at Dury, and all the French Headquarters within reach. We would learn for ourselves on the spot and through all the responsible persons exactly what the effort of the French army would be.

We spent the whole of the 30th at the front, saw all the commanders, got sufficiently near the shells to satisfy the President of the Council, dined with Pétain in his Headquarters train, and returned to Paris after midnight. Tired out, I was about to go to bed when a long cipher telegram from the Prime Minister arrived. Mr. Lloyd George repeated the message he had that day sent to President Wilson appealing for the despatch of American troops on the largest possible scale, whether formed in divisions or in the smallest formations, or even as drafts to British units. He directed me to see Clémenteau at once and to urge him in a separate telegram to support this appeal in the strongest manner. The Tiger received me at 9 a.m., quite unaffected by the fatigue of the previous day, and wrote while I waited a most vigorous and moving appeal. The action which President Wilson took in response to these requests was courageous in the last degree. Henceforward the main effort of the United States was to send men to France up to the fullest limit of ocean transport. In large formations or in small, trained or half-trained, without regard to armament, equipment or supplies, American manhood was to proceed to the war. The use to be made of all these great numbers of men, their organization, their training, their ammunition, their food and clothing—all were questions to be solved later on. This was an act of faith of the highest merit. No one who did not possess that intense form of power which comes from

expressing the will of a free people could have dared to decree a policy in appearance so improvident and even reckless. A hundred valid arguments existed against it, but all were relegated to a lower plane. From this moment the United States poured men into France, and by this action more than any other which it was in their power to take helped to bring the war to a speedy termination.

To fight in defence of his native land is the first duty of the citizen. But to fight in defence of some one else's native land is a different proposition. It may also be a sacred obligation, but it involves a higher conception. Willingly to cross the ocean and fight for strangers, far from home, upon an issue in the making of which one has had no say, requires a wide outlook upon human affairs and a sense of world responsibility. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, drawn by common citizenship under the Crown, had from the outset revealed this noble power of comprehension, and had made their decision good across broader spaces on the battlefields of three years. They had endured slaughters which no American army was destined to know, and their achievements are upon record. But the decision which in the emergency President Wilson took to remedy the consequences of previous long delay involved personal deprivations of a peculiar kind for the soldiers of the United States. To serve in one's national army, under one's own leader, amid a great mass of men animated by a common spirit is one ordeal. To serve in isolated divisions or brigades or even regiments under the orders of foreign Generals, flanked on either side by troops of different race and language and of unknown comradeship or quality, is another. Amid the hardships and terrors of war the soldier is accustomed to find his last remaining comfort of mind in being with his own friends and fellow-countrymen, sustained by the esprit de corps at least of 'The Battalion.' But in the dire need of the great struggle and in a loyal desire to share the tribulations of their allies, American soldiers by scores of thousands readily obeyed orders from their Government to serve, albeit under the general supervision of Pershing, as isolated companies or even platoons in British or French units in order that the largest number might come under the fire of the enemy at an earlier period.

Such conduct required from the Allies the utmost loyal exertions to equip the forces so trustfully sent. At this I laboured incessantly. My duties brought me into intimate and constant contact with the leading representatives in Europe of the United States Supply Services, as well as with General Bliss and upon occasion with General Pershing. From the first we worked together without a single misunderstanding or disagreement. No Government could have found a more able servant than Mr.

Stettinius, the representative of the American War Department. To business aptitudes of the highest order, he added a delightful simplicity and directness of character. He was already experienced in the munitions sphere, having handled the bulk of the great affairs which the British Government transacted through Messrs. Morgan before the American declaration of war. This event changed fundamentally our arrangements for buying American supplies. Morgans ceased to be our agents, and in August, 1917, an agreement was signed under which all our requirements from the United States were to be undertaken by an Official Purchasing Commission. This consisted of three members of the War Industries Board, Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, Mr. Robert S. Lovett and Mr. Robert S. Bookings. The War Industries Board, of which Mr. Baruch was Chairman, had exceptional powers as a final executive authority in the determination of priority between competing military and other claims, in the allocation of materials and manufacturing resources, and also in the fixing of prices and the control of capital issues. Sir Charles Gordon and Mr. Brand acted in Washington as my principal representatives in dealing with this body.

The arrangements worked excellently. We 'carried on the war in common' in every sense of the expression. We transferred masses of every kind of material, in every stage of production, from one ledger to the other in accordance with our very different needs as easily as two friends might share a luncheon-basket. There was no rigmarole or formalism in our affairs. We ransacked our cupboards to find anything the American troops in France required, and the Americans on the other hand, once the case was clearly explained in conversation, drew without hesitation from their own remoter programmes for our more urgent needs. We built common factories for tanks and aviation material. The Americans offered us their earliest supply of mustard gas. At the end I accepted from Mr. Stettinius a contract of over £100,000,000 sterling to supply the whole requirements of the United States Army in medium artillery (6-in. guns and howitzers) for the campaign of 1919. The principles of this contract were simple. We guaranteed the United States we would make no profit, and they guaranteed us we should suffer no loss, however the event might turn.

It was not until after the war was over that I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Baruch, the Chairman of the War Industries Board; but almost daily telegrams soon put us on excellent terms. I could feel at the other end of the cable a strong clear mind taking quick decisions and standing by them. After a few months' co-operation he paid me the very high compliment of placing in my hands the whole business of purchasing nitrates

for the United States from Chili. The Headquarters of the Inter-Allied Nitrate Commission were necessarily in London, and although the American Government was buying at least five times our requirements at this period, Mr. Baruch in a laconic telegram placed American interests in my hands. I now became the Nitrate King—the greatest there will ever be; and I reigned for nearly a year, apparently with acceptance. I formed a small department under my personal direction to cope with this entirely novel responsibility. At its head, under Sir Edmund Wyldbore-Smith, was a gifted young officer, Major Stomm, now lost to us, to whom I am deeply indebted. I used the potent influence which the control both of British and American purchases gave me, not only to procure nitrates, but to persuade the Chilean Government to hand over the sixteen valuable German ships which had taken refuge in Valparaiso Harbour. Two or three times a week I sent telegrams as long as letters to Mr. Baruch explaining exactly what we were doing, and he helped me and supported me throughout. The correspondence and its developments were only interrupted by the conclusion of the War. I print the culminating telegram:—

*Mr. Churchill to Mr. Baruch.*

*September 12, 1918.*

Secret and Personal.

The disablement by sabotage of German ships interned in Chilean ports appears to have been the immediate response to our nitrate agreement with the Chilean Government. It reveals that the Germans regard this agreement as a blow against themselves. . . . I therefore look forward hopefully to the negotiations I now propose to begin about the 1919 purchases, throughout the course of which my endeavour will be to secure the use of the German ships. . . . I cannot of course tell whether with the limited means at our disposal these objectives can be secured, but I am sure they are the ones to make for. I hope you agree. Meanwhile the first thing to do is to press the Chilean Government to put guards on the ships. It should be pointed out that if the Germans sink these ships in the fairway of the ports, the Chilean Government may be prevented from carrying out its nitrate contract. British and American interests in the execution of this contract give us each a right to make representations in this sense and within these limits. The acts of sabotage already committed afford the Chilean Government ample grounds. The British Foreign Office have at my request pressed the Chilean Minister in London strongly to have the ships guarded, and he has telegraphed accordingly to his

Government. I hope you may find it possible through the channels open to you to make similar representations. We need not commit ourselves any further than this at the present time. Pray let me know if any of your ships are hung up for want of nitrates. The Chilians have assured me they will do everything in their power to secure immediate cargoes being available.

Very Private.

I am becoming embarrassed by the difficulty of getting a definite answer from the American War Department as to what help they want us to give them in their artillery programmes for next year. You will understand that it is very difficult to keep my programmes in suspense for so long. I do not know whether you can say a helpful word to accelerate decision one way or the other, but if so I should be very grateful. Many thanks for your friendly message about the nitrate deal. I am so glad you approve of my negotiations.

When we met in Paris during the Peace Conference, I found that Mr. Baruch apparently considered me an authority upon the deeper technical aspects of the nitrate trade. He one day asked me my advice upon an urgent and complicated question concerning it. But reputations are easier lost than gained. I thought I would let well alone, and disengaged myself with suitable modesty.

Day after day Stettinius, Loucheur and I grappled with the problem of the United States artillery. The American War Department now aimed at placing in the field eighty divisions, numerically equal in infantry to two hundred British or French divisions, by the end of June, 1919. The rate at which American troops were landing in France was already far ahead of their munitions programme. They hoped to have forty-eight divisions in France by the end of 1918. The transformation of their industry was still incomplete, and they could only arm from American sources a fraction of the men they were devoting to the struggle. Armies of eighty divisions required nearly 12,000 guns of various natures, with an unceasing flow of ammunition thereafter. Towards this the United States could not count on supplying more than 600 medium and heavy guns and howitzers. They could however provide the material out of which the immense established gun plants of France could make 8,000, and those of Britain 3,000 pieces. By the adoption of a proportion of the British pattern, all the American and Canadian factories which we had hitherto used could be made immediately available for United States needs, both in guns and ammunition. The well-known disadvantages of a mixed armament lose much of

their importance when armies are upon the giant scale, especially if each nature of gun is uniform throughout the national forces.

All was finally arranged, and the following is my report to the War Cabinet of the British share in these large transactions:—

SUPPLIES TO THE UNITED STATES ARMIES.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*September 25, 1918.*

The United States in response to our appeals are sending men to Europe far in advance of their general munitions programme. Their shell programme is hopelessly in arrear [of these increased numbers]. Their gun programme is even worse. Not only in the main staples of equipment, but in a very large number of minor supplies, they will find themselves deficient. Unless therefore the arsenals of Great Britain and France can supply these deficiencies, the Americans cannot be expected to continue pouring in men, and the armies available for 1919 must be proportionately reduced. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that, working together, the French and British munition works can supply fully the needs of all the United States troops which can be brought by our maximum carrying capacity to Europe, and can supply them with good weapons and ample ammunition, provided only that the necessary raw materials are sent by America to be made up in our factories. No undue strain will be imposed upon our munition factories. The gun plants and the shell plants are running so smoothly now that, given raw material, they can easily meet their share of American needs. The processes of dilution and of releases of men will continue, in spite of this extra work, at a moderate rate. I am therefore pursuing the policy of doing everything possible to equip the United States armies, and offering every assistance in my power. I have agreed to supply them with more than 2,000 guns in 1919, and to make the ammunition for all these guns if they will send the raw materials. By this deal alone, considerably more than one hundred millions of British indebtedness to America will be extinguished. It seems to me indispensable that this process, to which we are deeply committed, should continue.

The longer we worked with the Americans, and the more interdependent our affairs became, the better grew our relations. In October we got rid of all sorts of rules prescribed in the early days of our association, and fell back on a 'gentleman's agreement' to help each other by every conceivable means, the sole test being the relative importance of particular services to the common cause.

*To the War Cabinet.**October 3, 1918.*

I have been approached by various officers of the American Expeditionary Force on the question of replacement from the United States of material used in supplies produced in this country for the American Army.

More than a year ago we insisted upon the policy of replacement for three reasons:—

- (1) At a time when a number of officers were asking for quantities of goods, estimated on a basis which we could not test, we found it useful to insist that these officers should get an assurance of replacements from Washington as some sort of guarantee of urgency.
- (2) At that time we were not certain to what extent our own orders would be squeezed out by the competition of the American programme.
- (3) The Shipping Controller naturally insisted that we should claim an allocation of an equivalent American tonnage.

As regards (1), the urgency of requirements is now much more fully understood both by the American staff and by ourselves, and is examined by Inter-Allied organizations set up for the purpose.

As regards (2), we are still apprehensive about our supplies from the United States. But we are compelled to admit that during the last eighteen months we have never, in fact, been denied supplies which have been really urgent, and we must assume that the United States Government will continue to meet us in the same spirit. In fact, they do their utmost to help us, and in spite of our special counter-claims we are heavily in their debt.

As regards tonnage, the Shipping Controller is making bargains with the American Government on much broader lines than the exchange of tens of thousands of tons, and I understand he no longer wishes us to bargain ton for ton as before.

In these circumstances, I propose to accede to the wishes of the American Army, to waive the question of replacement of specific quantities of material for particular cessions, and to rely on the broad principle that we are to help each other to the utmost of our ability. I shall however keep a full account of the material used in the goods supplied to the United States, and shall naturally continue to put these figures before the United States representatives when discussing with them the allocation from the United States of bulk supplies to Great Britain. I am sure this is the wisest course to pursue, and the most

likely to secure American assistance. *Nothing in the above proposals affects the question of money payments, which are all adjusted in the regular way.*<sup>1</sup>

I should be glad however to have the concurrence of the War Cabinet before definitely informing General Pershing that I am waiving our claim to specific replacement.

It is pleasing to revive these memories in years no longer terrible but sometimes bleak. No British Minister had, I believe, a greater volume of intricate daily business to conduct with United States representatives than I had during 1918. It is my duty to record the fact that no Ally could have given more resolute, understanding, and broadminded co-operation than the Ministry of Munitions received from the War Industries Board of the United States. These sentiments were reciprocated. I enjoy the honour of being the only foreign member of their post-war Association, and with the King's permission I wear the United States Distinguished Service Medal presented me by General Pershing.

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I have described the admirable behaviour of the munition workers during the crisis of the twenty-first of March. Misfortune and a sense of emergency seemed always to bring out their highest qualities. But once the situation at the front became easier, a wave of unrest swept across the factories. In the main this was born of overstrain; but beneath the surface, always ready to exploit any psychological reaction, lurked the pacifist and subversive elements of the labour world. In July a whole series of strikes broke out in the munition industries at centres as widely separated as Sheffield, Avonmouth, Oldham, Coventry, Gateshead, Farnham, Birmingham, Manchester, Hendon, Gainsborough and Newport. Most of these disputes were composed, and many others prevented, by the ceaseless and skilful activities of the Munitions Labour Department under Sir Stephenson Kent. But Coventry proved intractable. We were confronted with a widespread cessation of work by the highly paid men engaged in the production of aeroplane engines, thus seriously endangering our programmes. After consulting the Prime Minister I decided to take the step from which we had hitherto always abstained of withdrawing from men who would not work, their munitions protection against being taken for the Army. In order that the case might be fully explained to the public and to the workers throughout the country, I assembled, as was the custom on critical occasions in the war, the representatives of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association. Fifty or sixty gentlemen attended, covering

<sup>1</sup> My subsequent italics.



virtually the entire Press. I could see from their faces as I proceeded that they viewed the decision with concern, deepening in *some quarters into consternation*. Despite their misgivings all undertook to sustain the national policy, and the Prime Minister continued resolute. On July 16 I therefore issued the following notice which was displayed everywhere in Coventry.

July 16, 1918.

Owing to the scarcity of skilled labour in the country created by the needs of the Army and the grave emergency of the war, it became necessary some time ago to make sure that the skilled labour available was fairly shared among munition firms, and in some cases to place a limit on the number of skilled workers which particular employers or firms were entitled to engage. If this had not been done, employers, instead of making reasonable efforts to economize skilled labour so that what we have might be used to the best public advantage, would have been led to scramble against each other for skilled men regardless of the national interest. One firm would have been overcrowded with skilled men; another doing equally important war work would have been stopped for want of them. The Defence of the Realm Act therefore gives power to the Government to limit the right of employers to engage skilled labour beyond their proper needs, and the use of this power was approved by the War Cabinet and announced on June 8th.

It is also the law that trade disputes in time of war shall be settled by arbitration without a stoppage of work. But the strike which is threatened at Coventry is not a trade dispute. It does not arise out of the ordinary relations of Capital and Labour. It cannot be settled by arbitration. It can only be regarded as an attempt to subvert and deflect the avowed policy of the State in time of national danger.

In consequence of this fact, the Minister of Munitions finds it necessary to state at the earliest moment that men who abandon their work in these circumstances will by that very act divest themselves of any protection against recruitment for the Army if they are liable to serve. It is already hard that men between forty and fifty should be called up for the Army while younger men are left to earn high wages in the munitions factories. Only the fact that these men are absolutely needed at their work has induced the nation reluctantly to put up with what is from any other point of view unfair. It would indeed be wrong that a young man who is given special protection from recruiting to enable him to do work of great importance should refuse to do that work and yet that his protection should continue.

The Minister has therefore obtained the authority of the War Cabinet, not only to proceed with the utmost rigour of the law against all persons conspiring or inciting to such a cessation of work, but also to make it clear that the protection from military service of all or any men who cease work in these circumstances will be allowed to lapse immediately.

An anxious week-end intervened. On the Monday considerable numbers of men from the Seamen and Fireman's Union, many of whom had been submarined more than once, entered Coventry headed by Mr. Havelock Wilson and preceded by bands; and at the same time the organization of the former Women's Suffrage Societies, under the fiery guidance of Miss Christabel Pankhurst, descended in a cloud of speakers, propagandists and canvassers. Patriotic meetings were held in all parts of the town. Under these varied pressures the strike collapsed, and by Tuesday night all Coventry was at work again.

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From May onwards the Commander-in-Chief had assigned me regular quarters in the zone of his armies. I had a few rooms and facilities for a mess in an old French country-house amid wonderful avenues of trees near the village of Verchocq. I could reach this by aeroplane in two hours from Hendon, and so could upon occasions work at the Ministry of Munitions in the morning and follow the course of a great battle in the afternoon. I could come and go where I pleased on the front, and so far as it was possible without undue risk, could see all that there was to be seen. About one-fifth of my business lay at Headquarters or in Paris, where the Ministry of Munitions had large establishments. One way or another, either with General Tudor or with General Lipsett until he was killed, and also with Sir Alexander Godley, or with General Birdwood and the Australian Corps in which my brother was serving, or with Rawlinson's army, I managed to be present at almost every important battle during the rest of the war. Once I flew in a fighting plane between the lines while a considerable action was in progress below. But from the height of 7,000 feet to which we had to keep on account of the German artillery, there was nothing to see but the bursting shells of the barrages far below. It is impossible to see a modern battle. One is always either much too far or much too near.

Meanwhile the schemes and preparations for 1919 were moving steadily forward. Maeterlinck says the God of the bees is the future. At the Ministry of Munitions we were the bees of Hell, and we stored our hives with the pure essence of slaughter. It astonishes me to read in these after years the diabolical schemes

for killing men on a vast scale by machinery or chemistry to which we passionately devoted ourselves. '*Les bons pères de famille sont capables de tout.*' We denied ourselves nothing that the laws of war with their German applications allowed. The Germans had installed the cylinders of poison gas. We had followed them swiftly in these sinister experiments. In the end many more Germans died from British gas than British from German. In 1918 the enemy had far the larger supplies of the irritant mustard gas, but our outputs were broadening daily. Although the accidentally burned and blistered at the factories exceeded 100 per cent. of the staff every three months, volunteers were never lacking.

The Mechanical Battle now took definite shape.

*Mr. Churchill to General Harington (Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff).*

Secret.

June 21, 1918.

The considerations principally I have in mind are of a more general nature.

The first thing to visualize is:—

(1) The future battle: when it is to be fought: by what methods, and on what scale.

(2) To answer this you must have some general idea of the resources and possibilities of Supply. If we continue working on present lines and existing programmes, we should have produced by April 1, 1919, 3,629 tanks of the Mark V and later varieties of heavy and medium. Working on till June on repeat orders would add 810 heavy and 370 medium. Châteauroux<sup>1</sup> should produce by April 1, 975, and on the existing scale and repeat orders could add by June 900 heavy tanks. To these totals can be added the surviving Mark IV tanks, estimated at 482; total heavy and medium tanks 7,166, from which must be deducted any fresh battle casualties from now on, which perhaps we might take as three or four hundred. These are maximum figures *on existing lines*. Unless special efforts are made in regard to man-power, their realization might well be somewhat retarded. But if special efforts are made, these programmes can probably be counted on. If fighting tanks are required in any large numbers in addition to these, altogether new and special arrangements would have to be made. It would not be impossible to make such arrangements if a decision were taken during the next month, but it means an entirely new effort on top of one which is already serious.

<sup>1</sup> The Anglo-Franco-American factory.

Besides the big fighting and medium fighting tanks of all kinds above enumerated, there should be available a very large number, possibly from 8,000 to 10,000, less battle casualties, of little tanks (Renaults).

Thirdly, there are the cross-country vehicles and tractors. I think you should assume at this stage and for the purposes of your battle plan that you can get all you are likely to require of these, even for an operation on the greatest scale, if the measures are taken not later than July.

(3) Taking the above as a general guide, it should be possible to formulate a definite tactical scheme comprising

- (a) the length of front to be attacked ;
- (b) the locality suitable for this form of attack ;
- (c) the method of the attack ;
- (d) the number of troops to be (i) employed, and (ii) carried in the attack ;
- (e) the distance to be traversed by the attack ;
- (f) the use to be made of all our other military resources before and during the attack ; and
- (g) the military policy necessary to bring about the situation favourable to the attack.

(4) In this study it would be right, provisionally and within limits, to vary the data so as to reach the best possible form of attack. It should be possible for instance, by special efforts, to make for you the actual weapons which you require, and to make them in their true proportion. If the existing types do not meet all the needs that may be foreseen in certain parts of the field or certain phases of the battle, there is time now to make new ones. It is not impossible to do anything that is desired, if sufficient importance is attached to it and adequate time and resources are assigned. There must however be behind exceptional exertions in material the driving power of a great military conception supported by the highest professional authority.

(5) If the General Staff are able to formulate their requirements after the sort of process indicated above, I am prepared to take all the steps necessary to secure a punctual, abundant and exact supply of what is requisite.

(6) It is evident that as soon as the main outlines of the plan have been decided a complete unity of purpose must be established between the British Commander-in-Chief and the General Staff at the War Office.

(7) Until the plan has been worked out both on its tactical and supply side and can be presented as a whole on the joint authority of the C.I.G.S. and the British Commander-in-Chief, it seems scarcely worth while to discuss it with the French or

Americans. For the purposes of the plan their co-operation should be presumed. The unity and integrity of a military conception should not be marred by a succession of compromises and amalgamations. Afterwards, when the plan is ready as a whole, improvements may be suggested or modifications may be necessary as the result of consultation with the Allies.

The above seems to me to be the proper sequence of action. The time is passing, the weeks are slipping remorselessly away. Every one's mind is absorbed in averting defeat in 1918, and meanwhile we are losing the chance of gaining victory in 1919. In the autumn it will be already too late. I have seen this melancholy process repeated year after year since the beginning of the struggle. In this war, the initiative can only be regained by looking and planning at least one year ahead, and patiently subordinating intervening events to the supreme climax.

If action is settled on the main lines, the details of organization of the Tank Corps in the War Office and in the field, its association with Design and Supply, and its liaison with the Allies, will all fall smoothly and easily into their places; but without a central and dominant purpose, culminating in an aggressive battle, nothing is possible, and we shall continue to be the sport of circumstances and of our enemy.

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The man-power problem was at this time most complex. The War Office and General Headquarters, although neither anticipated an end of the war in 1918, continued to press incessantly for the release of men, and of skilled men, from munitions to the Army. On the other hand their demands for output of all kinds—particularly in the highest class of material—speedily increased. I had convinced myself that all should be staked upon a battle in the spring and summer of 1919. It was too late to strengthen the man-power of the Army during the campaign of 1918. Men taken in July could not be trained and reach the front in time to affect the operations already in progress. I wished therefore to develop the greatest munitions production in the autumn and winter of 1918, and to release the largest possible numbers for service in the field from January, 1919, onwards. The following extracts from notes, the first written by me in July and the second in August, explain the two stages of this policy which was, broadly speaking, adopted.

#### MUNITIONS AND THE LIMITS OF RECRUITING.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*July, 1918.*

Since the beginning of this year we have released no fewer

than 100,000 men, nearly all of whom are skilled men, for military service. We have been deprived of all the Grade I. men of 19 and 20 without excepting even draughtsmen, men employed in making gauges, breech mechanisms, optical instruments, and vital pivotal men.

Hitherto I have done everything in my power to support the policy of the War Office and the Ministry of National Service. But I consider the time has now come when that policy requires to be the subject of a general reconsideration. Last autumn it was obvious that Russia would be out before America could come in, and that consequently the most strenuous efforts should be made to enable our Army to meet the attacks which would come upon it in the spring. The disasters of the spring rendered it still more imperative to provide men to carry us through the summer. I consider therefore we were right to run very great risks in all other directions in order to maintain the fighting front.

We have now to take into consideration a period where the conditions are entirely different from those of last autumn and this spring. The immediate crisis is not over, and indeed the worst may have yet to come. But men taken from industry after July will not reach the battle-front in time to influence the decision. So far as man-power is concerned, the die is cast. Secondly, the Americans, who have ten million men between 20 and 30 on whom to draw, are now arriving in great numbers, more than 270,000 having disembarked in a single month. The main contribution to our manhood next year must be derived from them. If we are to obtain any effective superiority in numbers, it can only be by American aid. No contribution that we can make, can substantially alter the situation in a numerical sense. The question for us therefore is how to use the last remains of our man-power so as to develop the greatest possible military effort. This will not necessarily be by making the largest possible number of infantry soldiers.

Since the subject was last considered, the American forces in Europe have risen to 1,000,000 men. It is stated that more than 2,000,000 Americans have already been enlisted, that 3,000,000 will have been enlisted by the 1st September, and that the War Department is preparing clothing for 4,000,000 as from January 1. It is evident that the solution of the man-power problem lies in the speedy transportation to France of these great numbers, their training and organization on the battle-front, and lastly their equipment and supply. The first 1,000,000 who have come have been almost entirely equipped by Britain and France. But for the fact that we were

able to supply them with artillery, machine-guns, rifles, trench mortars, &c., and to feed them with munitions of all kinds, no use in the present crisis could have been made of this first million. My latest report from America states that the American army in France will be almost entirely dependent during the whole of 1918 on British and French artillery production. If we are to continue to put, as we must do, the most extreme pressure upon the American Government to pour its men over, we must be in a position to guarantee them thorough and immediate equipment when they arrive, and ample supply thereafter. . . .

The limiting factors are perpetually changing. During the rest of 1918 and the first half of 1919 the limiting factor on the employment of American troops will not be men or tonnage or food, but equipment of all kinds. For the time being the American munitions programme, particularly in guns and aeroplanes, is woefully behind their available resources in man-power. Unless we and the French are able to supplement promptly every deficiency in the American munitions programme, the despatch of very large numbers of their troops may be retarded from this cause. On the one hand, there are available in America enormous numbers of men in the prime of life ; on the other, in Great Britain, for the sake of getting comparatively small numbers of men of inferior physique who will not be much use, or of superior skill who cannot be spared, we run the risk of endangering production of munitions on which not only our own Armies, but the rapid importation of American troops, depend. The situation has in fact undergone a very marked change, and we shall commit another of the great mistakes of the war if we do not adapt our policy to it in time. . . .

It seems to me evident that we are now going too far and over-shooting our mark in regard to man-power. Once the emergency of this summer has been surmounted, we ought not to rupture our munitions supply, particularly our supply of vital modern appliances, for the sake of adding 20,000 men more or less to our Army of over 3,000,000. We ought on the contrary to make sure that our great plants here are kept working at their fullest possible capacity in order that our own Army may be equipped with the most perfect, scientific, and life-saving weapons, and in order that we may be able to place in the field the largest possible number of Americans.

*To the War Cabinet.*

*August, 1918.*

The number of divisions available on either side at the

commencement of the battle-period must be considered in relation to the power of replenishing those divisions with drafts. . . .

If the numbers of divisions expected by Sir Henry Wilson are realized, they will afford us by 1st July [1919] a moderate superiority. But this superiority could be greatly enhanced by the holding in readiness of an exceptionally large number of men not in divisional formations but as drafts. Although the American military organization may not be able to achieve the formation of more than 80 divisions by the date mentioned, there is no reason why another million American soldiers trained only as individuals should not be available for the climax.

Once the foreseeable needs of the American divisions on the basis of three replenishments during the battle period have been provided for, we should make the strongest possible appeal to President Wilson to supply an additional 200,000 or 300,000 men—over and above everything else—for service with British cadres, and we should adapt our own organization to profit by this. Above all, we should ask continually for the attaching of an American battalion to each British brigade.

What is going to win a battle like this is the intensity of the fighting effort during a limited period of time. The only way to save life is to secure the superiorities necessary for *speedy* victory. The way to incur the greatest amount of slaughter is to continue waging war at three-quarter speed with well-matched forces. It is much better not to try at all, than to three-quarters try a plan we three-quarters believe in.

Clearly the dominating factor is the enormous reserve of American manhood which may be made available by wise and energetic action from now on. . . . I am of opinion that if it is decided to make an effort of this character everything should be subordinated to it; that the output of munitions, and consequently the requirement of coal, should be drastically reduced during the summer months of 1919, that we should cut in very largely upon our reserves of ammunition, &c., and that we should liberate from the mines, the munitions works, and the shipyards for the period of the battle a large number of men, as many as possible of whom would be returned the moment the main decision had declared itself. It seems to me that a scheme of this kind might be elaborated and surveyed. We are justified in running great risks to win an early and complete victory, because, even if we fail, we shall be steadily up-borne by the growing military power of America.



Very often things are started because they are necessary at the time, and then afterwards they are kept going indefinitely, eating up men, although the need which brought them into existence may have diminished or gradually changed. If we really believe in the possibility of winning a decisive battle in 1919, we must narrowly scrutinize every establishment in this country to see whether it can release forces for the decisive phase. . . .

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Once the leading personalities of the General Staff at the War Office lent themselves to the scheme of the mechanical battle, it advanced steadily. I had appointed General Seely, who had been during the whole war in the fighting line, to be head of the Trench Warfare Department. I found myself strong enough in July to negotiate the placing of a block order for 10,000 cross-country caterpillar vehicles in the United States. Mr. Henry Ford's vast organization was capable, with other important American firms, of executing this contract without detriment to their other obligations. Mr. Perry, one of Mr. Ford's most trusted assistants, who had for some time been serving in the Ministry of Munitions, was sent on a special mission to Washington to unfold by word of mouth to Mr. Baruch alone the full scheme and purpose of our request. Mr. Baruch, having consulted the President, swiftly cleared all obstacles from the path. No questions were asked by subordinates, and full delivery of the whole 10,000 was guaranteed by the spring. Such a degree of mutual confidence among the high British and American personnel had been attained, and such was the authority they exerted, that not more than three or four people had to know the strategic object for which these machines were designed. The matter was opened to Foch, on whom it produced a favourable impression. On July 24 he addressed a communication to all the Allied armies, asking to be furnished as soon as possible with the total forces they could put in the line on January 1 and April 1, 1919, respectively. He asked for this return under five heads: (1) the number of divisions and their flow of drafts; (2) the artillery—field, heavy and very heavy (*A.L.G.P.*), together with the necessary ammunition; (3) the number of aeroplanes of combat, observation and bombing; (4) *chars de combat* (tanks)—light, medium and heavy, excluding *chars de service* (supply tanks); (5) *mechanical means of cross country transport for artillery, munitions and supplies of all kinds.*<sup>1</sup> He added:—

'To reach the final decision of the war as early as possible in 1919 each of the Allied nations should prepare for the

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

commencement of that year its maximum effort. For that:

'The British and French armies should maintain and nourish their present number of infantry divisions; the American Army should increase its number to the utmost extent.

'Munitions should be prepared in quantities sufficient to permit of the prosecution of a battle of long duration. Aviation and tanks should receive the greatest development possible.'

Thus at last the highest authority was engaged behind the true ideas, and the objections of half-informed potentates could be shouldered out of the way without the need of dangerously elaborate explanations. Although around us great battles raged and the thunder of the guns was unceasing, my mind amid a vivid life of movement and activity always rested on one picture of the future: 10,000 fighting tanks, large and small, specially adapted to the ground they had to traverse, moving forward simultaneously behind the artillery barrage on fronts of assault aggregating 300 or 400 kilometres; behind them, working with them, British, French and American infantry; and behind these again, 10,000 caterpillar vehicles unarmed and unarmoured, but each carrying forward across country, over fields and trenches, all the food, ammunition, kit and supplies of every kind which one platoon would require, while the roads remained clear and free for the advance of artillery and reserves.

But fortune had earlier and happier solutions in store.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE TURN OF THE TIDE

The Sombre German Outlook—The Ordeal of the Emperor—The Rheims Plan—Foch's intervention—The Curtain rises—The Battle of Rheims—The German Repulse—Foch and Pétain—Foch and Haig—The 18th of July—The XXII Corps—Mangin's Counter-stroke—His Comment—Rupprecht suspended—Foch's Policy—The Decisive Battle—August 8—'Rawly'—The Battlefield.

A DREAR panorama confronted the rulers of Germany in the month that followed the Battle of Noyon, and a growing sense of the inevitable began to chill all hearts. No rift, no crack, no crevice appeared in the mighty concourse of States, almost the world in arms, which glared stonily across the lines of battle at Germany and her Allies. France under Clémenceau was flint. The British Army was known to be rapidly recovering, and under Lloyd George's leadership the whole Empire resounded with the clang of redoubled exertion. The Americans were pouring in across the open seas. Italy, so nearly extinguished in the preceding winter, renewed her strength. Meanwhile from every quarter dark tidings flowed in upon Great Headquarters. Turkey was desperate. A sinister silence brooded in Bulgaria. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was upon the verge of dissolution. A mutinous outbreak had occurred in the German Navy. And now the valiant German Army itself, the foundation and life of the whole Teutonic Powers, showed disquieting symptoms. The German nation had begun to despair, and the soldiers became conscious of their mood. Ugly incidents occurred. Desertion increased, and the leave men were reluctant to return. The German prisoners liberated from Russia by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk returned infected with the Lenin virus. In large numbers they refused to go again to the front. A campaign of unmerited reproach was set on foot against the German officer class. Their painstaking and thorough routine, which had enabled them on all the fronts to exact two Ally lives for every German, was no protection from the charge that they did not share the privations of the troops. The British fire had bitten deep in March and April, and for the first time since the earliest days of the war Germany felt the swift blood-drain she was accustomed to exact from others. Still

the majestic war machine obeyed the levers of authority, and the teeth of its thousand wheels, in spite of occasional jars and tremors, kept grinding on remorselessly.

And in Ludendorff was found a hardy gambler incapable of withdrawing from the game while he still had heavy stakes to play. Who shall say whether at this moment he was right or wrong? He could not tell whether the adoption of a defensive policy, of great strategic retirements, of gaining at all costs the winter for negotiation, might not have been the signal for the collapse he dreaded. No, it was better to brazen it out to the bitter end. He had gathered the strength for one more plunge. Was there not still one more good chance? A crashing victory against the French, the advance to Paris, and then, when all Allied reserves had been interposed to shield the Capital, a sudden right-handed drive against the British and the Channel ports. Such at least was his resolve.

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The ordeal of the German Emperor during the great Battle of Rheims has been the subject of an imaginative but profoundly instructive study by a German writer of distinction.<sup>1</sup> The story is confined to the hour to hour doings and experiences of the Emperor during the period of less than ten days in which the battle was launched and decided. And with German thoroughness more than five hundred closely printed pages are devoted to this theme. The arrival of the Imperial train at a wayside station; the supreme War Lord's meeting with his Generals, Hindenburg solemn, deferential, vague; Ludendorff pre-occupied, terse, reserved, the man at the wheel—such is the opening picture. The Imperial trappings are become threadbare. These men are grappling with doom. They do not seek to add a third to their confidence. The Emperor is ceremoniously relegated to a tall wooden tower specially constructed in a wood, from whose platform above the level of the treetops the All Highest would be in the most favourable position to witness what might happen. And here with his immediate retinue he must dwell perched for six whole days, eyes glued to telescopes that show nothing but distant fumes and blurs and smudges; while his throne totters and his people's fortune is decided, utterly helpless and useless, a prey to the worst anxieties, but at any rate out of the way.

Ludendorff's plan for the battle of Rheims followed the usual German pincer model, and was in itself almost on the scale of the 21st of March. Two separate simultaneous attacks, with a silent gap of 20 kilometres between them, were launched on each

<sup>1</sup> *Der König*, by Carl Rosner.

side of Rheims with the object of biting off that city and the difficult hilly region around it. The Seventh German Army attacked across the Marne to the west of Rheims, and the First and Third German Armies to the east. Fifteen divisions were assigned to the first wave of each attack. The total width of the offensive, including the gap, was nearly 70 kilometres. Its general convergence was upon Chalons. If this battle prospered, the growing threat to Paris would draw the Allied reserves southward to defend the capital. Whereupon, when the situation was ripe, the Crown Prince Rupprecht with thirty-one divisions would fall on the British in Flanders and resume the battle of the Lys and the drive at the Channel ports. The conception was vast, and the forces employed in the whole combination the most widespread used since the original invasion.

The secret of these designs was not hidden from the Allies. The concentrations of the enemy were correctly defined. Information from deserters and from prisoners taken in organized raids supplied the French and British Headquarters with full confirmatory details, while time for the necessary preparations yet remained. Haig braced himself to meet Rupprecht, and Pétain organized the Rheims front with minute and studious care. The French line was held to the west of Rheims by the army of Bertelot and to the east by that of Gouraud, both comprised in the army group of Maistre. These measures taken, the general concert of the gigantic battle rested with Foch.

The intervention of the supreme control was decisive. Neither Haig nor Pétain, with their own intense preoccupations, could have achieved the general view. Nor is it likely that from a discussion between two equally threatened equals, each with vital objectives to guard, the right arrangements would have emerged. Between co-operation, however loyal, and united action, there is a gap wide enough to turn victory into defeat. Foch, trusting to the information to hand in spite of all its uncertainty, resolved to allow the Rheims battle to develop, and then at its height to strike at the right flank of the advancing Germans with a heavy counter-stroke. For this purpose he massed with all possible secrecy in the forests around Villers-Cotterets an army of more than twenty divisions and 350 small French tanks. He drew these forces from the reserves which Pétain wished to keep to guard Paris. He also on the 12th asked that four British divisions should be moved into the French zone, two south of the Somme and two astride of that river to ensure the connection between the French and British armies about Amiens, and to enable him to move four French divisions farther to the east and nearer to the impending battle. This was agreed to by the British Headquarters and orders were given

accordingly. On the 13th Foch demanded that these four divisions should be immediately placed unreservedly at his disposal for the battle, and further that four more British divisions should be despatched to take their places.

These were serious requests. Opposite the Hazebrouck sector, perilously near the coast, Rupprecht was known to have eight divisions in the line, and twenty-three, of which twenty-one were fresh, divisions in reserve. Against this already mounted attack the British could muster only fifteen divisions, including reserves, and of these two were half-trained and one of second line personnel. Sir Douglas Haig moved immediately the two additional divisions which were to replace those astride of the Somme, but he then dwelt upon the accumulating preparations of the Germans to attack the British front and the uncertainty as to where the next blow would fall, and declared himself against despatching any troops to Champagne at the moment. He asked that at least decision should be deferred on this last point till he could meet Foch at Mouchy as had been arranged for the 15th.

Meanwhile the British Government were alarmed by the substantial weakening of the British Reserves when unquestionably a series of enormous attacks could be launched at any moment upon our much tried troops. They were also deeply offended by the diversion from the British zone of almost all the American troops who had arrived. The Prime Minister called a meeting of the War Cabinet on the evening of the 13th at Hassocks, and as the result General Smuts was sent to Haig to say that if he considered it desirable to invoke the 'Beauvais agreement' the Government would support him. Matters were in this position when the battle began.

As the curtain rises on the new scene we may take a sweeping glance at the principal characters. The Emperor before the dawn of July 15 is on his leafy perch among the tree-tops. Ludendorff is at Avesnes on tenterhooks. Pétain's attention is riveted upon his front, and the capital city which lies only 90 kilometres behind it, on which the storm is about to break. Haig and his Chief of Staff think on the whole that the second, rather than the first blow, is reserved for them; but that it will be terrible they have no doubt. The French line, they believe, will hold after bending; but the possibility of a French counter-stroke is too good to be true. East of Rheims behind a false front elaborately maintained lies Gouraud, a fiery spirit in a war-shattered frame, skilful, knightly, accurately informed. He knows even the German zero; and three hours before the German bombardment begins, all his artillery open counter-preparation fire on the crowded batteries and assembly trenches

of the assault. In the forests of Villers-Cotterets crouches the army of Foch's counter-stroke—two strong American divisions, and eighteen of bitter Frenchmen. At its head we see again the impetuous Mangin. Dark days have come to him since Douaumont was recaptured; the Nivelle disaster of which he was the scapegoat, dismissal from his command, indeed from all commands, a Ministerial order not to reside within 50 kilometres of Paris, afterwards petty employment while Armageddon rages—horrible to endure. Suddenly Clémenceau, above scapegoat-making, reaches down a strong hand. Foch, then only an adviser, proposes 'To Mangin a Corps.' Opposition and prejudice are swept aside. After six months' probation in command of the IXth Corps, 'Mangin the Butcher' is placed once again at the head of an army. And now, like a hungry leopard on a branch, sees Incomparable Opportunity approaching and about to pass below. And last of all in the beautiful Château of Bombon, where the sunrise bathes the lawns and the ripple of waters joins the accompaniment of summer, sits Marshal Foch with Weygand at his side and his 'military family' around him. He has battles to fight behind the line as well as in front of it.

Down from beyond the German parapets leaped the cataracts of fire and steel. Forward the indomitable veterans of the Fatherland! It is the Marne that must be crossed. Thousands of cannon and machine guns lash its waters into foam. But the shock troops go forward, war-worn, war-hardened, and once again '*Nach Paris*' is on their lips. Launching frail pontoons and rafts in a whistling, screaming, crashing hell they cross the river, mount the further bank, grapple with the French; grapple also with the Americans—numerous, fresh and coolly handled. After heavy losses they drive them back, and make good their lodgments. They throw their bridges, drag across guns and shells, and when night falls upon the bloody field, 50,000 Germans have dug themselves in on a broad front 4 miles beyond the Marne. Here they stop to gather further strength after performing all that soldiers have ever done.

But it was otherwise to the east of Rheims. Gouraud's counter-preparation smote the First and Third German Armies even before the signal to advance was due. The General had unmasked all his batteries on the hazard of his information. Would he be justified by the event? His Chief of Staff entered his room at Chalons watch in hand. 'They have not begun. It is past zero. We have been betrayed by the prisoners.' 'There are still two minutes,' answered Gouraud, also watch in hand: and thus the two men stood waiting breathlessly for a new cannonade to supervene upon the muffled thunder of the French bombardment. Punctually as Gouraud's watch pointed to the

hour, a roar like a railway train passed overhead, and with deafening detonation a gigantic German shell shattered the neighbouring lighting plant and plunged the Headquarters in total darkness. The two French officers received this unmistakable message with feelings of profound thankfulness and relief. Their batteries had not been exposed in vain.

Very heavy losses were inflicted upon the assembled Germans by the forestalling fire. The advance began under heavy disadvantages. The false French front resisted ruggedly and must be laboriously exterminated. And then, beyond the range of their own artillery, the Germans collided with the real front, flaming, impenetrable, alive with counter-attacks. All along the line from end to end without exception, the advance of the First and Third Armies withered before the French defence; and after a day of frightful slaughter, nothing of consequence had been gained. The check was decisive. 'By noon of the 16th,' says Ludendorff, 'G.H.Q. had given orders for the suspension of the offensive to the First and Third Armies and for their organization for defence by withdrawing certain divisions for this purpose. . . . Once the difficult decision to suspend the offensive of these armies had been taken, it was useless to attempt to advance further across the Marne or to leave our troops on the Southern bank. We had to make arrangements for crossing before the retreat could even begin.' The retreat was fixed for the night between the 20th and 21st. He still hoped however to make progress up the valley of the Ardre towards Rheims.

These decisions of Ludendorff were not of course known to Foch or Pétain, and the 15th was a day of great stress for General Foch. The first reports of the battle on the morning of the 15th from Gouraud's army were so satisfactory that Foch set off for his rendezvous with Haig at Mouchy. There can be little doubt that Grand Quartier Général was lukewarm about the Mangin counter-stroke. It is at least certain that they strove to delay it. In later years it has been said that Pétain argued: 'It is too soon. Let the Germans advance further. Let them engage their reserves fully in the main battle, and your counter-stroke will be all the more effective.' Whether this was the real motive or an after explanation to cover undue sensitiveness about Paris, will long be disputed. But there can be no dispute about the action of General Foch. On his way to Mouchy he stopped at General Fayolle's headquarters at Noailles. There he heard that Grand Quartier Général had issued instructions for all available French reserves to be held in readiness to go to Rheims. He immediately cancelled these orders and said that the preparations for Mangin's attack should be pressed on with all speed and that the attack should take place as soon as possible. He wanted it to



take place on the 17th, but acquiesced reluctantly in the date being finally fixed for the 18th.

Further protests were raised by the French Headquarters. Whether they emanated directly from Pétain is not certain; but at 12.25 Foch telephoned to Pétain from Mouchy—'There can be no question of any slowing down, still less of stopping the Mangin preparations. In case of urgent, extreme need you may take troops absolutely indispensable, informing me at once.' This done he opened his discussion with Haig. The British Headquarters believed that the defeat of the 27th of May had grievously affected the morale of the French Army. They were extremely sceptical of the ability and resolve of the French to deliver a heavy offensive punch. They feared lest their own reserves should be reduced, not for the purpose of a decisive counter-stroke at the proper moment, but merely to add to the mass of troops between Paris and the enemy. The British and French High Commands were in close touch with each other, and the defensive views of Pétain were well known to Haig. The Generalissimo had nothing to his record but the disaster of the 27th of May, and no machine at his disposal beyond his group of personal staff officers in the Château of Bombon. Haig might sympathize with Foch's conception. But would it be translated into action? In the crisis of the battle on the Rheims front, with Paris perhaps in the balance, would not the known views of Pétain and the power of the French staff organization prevail? Nevertheless Haig agreed to move the whole of the second four British divisions to the aid of the French, and the first two of them were actually ordered to complete the XXIInd Corps south of the Somme.

Late that same night General Smuts, member and envoy of the War Cabinet, arrived upon the scene. He explained his mission to the Commander-in-Chief, and offered him the support of the British Government, if he thought he was being unduly pressed. Haig replied 'that he would take the risk, that he accepted the responsibility, and that he had acted in the main interest of the Allied cause.' He even gave Smuts a written note that he 'took the risk and fully realized that if the dispositions (of Foch) proved to be wrong, the blame will rest on me. On the other hand, if they prove right, the credit will lie with Foch. With this,' he added pointedly, 'the Government should be well satisfied!'

Meanwhile a tense discussion was in progress at Provins. After the dismissal of General Anthoine in the aftermath of the 27th of May a new figure had appeared at the French Headquarters. The young and audacious Buat, chosen by Foch and Clémenceau, had been appointed the Major-General of the

Armies and, independently of Pétain's wishes, had become his right-hand man. Buat, as he was no doubt expected to do by those who had selected him, hurled his weight upon the side of the immediate counter-stroke; and in the end Pétain and the French staff consented to obey the orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

The battle on the Marne raged during the whole of the 16th with heavy French counter-attacks. On the morning of the 17th Foch sent General Du Cane with a letter to Haig on the subject of the attack threatening on the British front, and the precautionary disposal of the British reserves to meet it. As Du Cane was stepping into his car, Weygand, who had followed him through the doorway, said: 'General Foch authorizes you to tell Sir Douglas Haig that Mangin's army will attack to-morrow morning, at 8 a.m., with twenty divisions.'

The British Headquarters Staff were filled with the deepest misgiving upon the dispersal of their Reserves. Fortified by the Smuts visit they had made the strongest representation to the Commander-in-Chief during the 16th. General du Cane was confronted on arrival with the draft of a letter which awaited Haig's signature, demanding the immediate return to the north of the Somme of all the four divisions of the XXII<sup>nd</sup> Corps. His personal interview with the Commander-in-Chief did not prevent the signing and sending of this letter. But Haig, convinced that the great counter-attack was now certain, added a verbal message that 'If the British troops were wanted to exploit a success, they should of course be used.' 'This in the event was all that was needed.

I have described these transactions in some detail, because they mark the crucial moment in Foch's career as Supreme Commander of the Allied Armies, and show, as it is right to do, alike his difficulties and the dominating personal part he played in victories which all henceforward were to share. They show also the important aid which in a crisis of terrible uncertainty was given him by Sir Douglas Haig and the British Army.

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Let us now for a moment cross the lines.

'In the night of the 17th-18th,' writes Ludendorff,<sup>1</sup> 'I myself went to the Headquarters of the Army Group of Crown Prince Rupprecht, to review once more the state of their preparations. The attack was intended as a continuation of that which had been suspended at the end of April. It was to be made by the Fourth and Sixth Armies north of the Lys, its

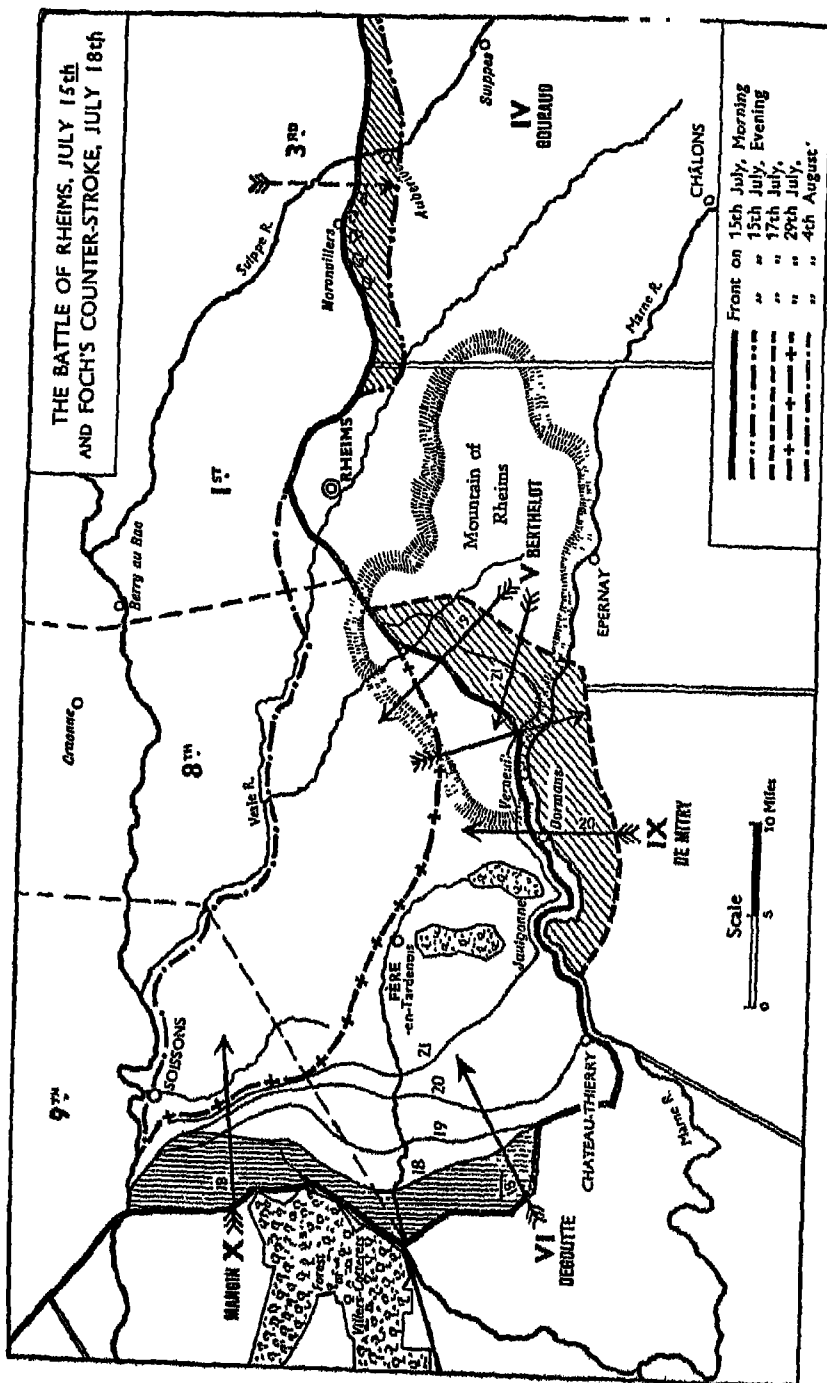
<sup>1</sup> *My War Memories*, pp. 667-8.

objectives being the possession of the commanding heights between Poperinghe and Bailleul, as well as the high ground round Hazebrouck. During the discussion with the Army Group of Crown Prince Rupprecht on the morning of the 18th I received the first news that, by means of an unexpected tank attack, the French had pierced the line south-west of Soissons. . . . I concluded the conference at the Army Group of Crown Prince Rupprecht (naturally in a state of the greatest nervous tension) and then returned to Avesnes.'

At the appointed hour Mangin's army had sprung. His battle followed the Cambrai model. There was no artillery preparation. Three hundred and thirty small Renault tanks came out of the woods and ground their way through the German line. Behind them the French infantry rolled forward in immense superiority. Upon a wide front the enemy were overwhelmed. Behind the front the German troops were placidly harvesting the abundant crops. They cast down their sickles and fought where they stood. The high corn hampered their machine-guns except where occasionally provided with special tripods, and the small tanks continued murderously to break up the defence. By nightfall Mangin's army had advanced an average of 5 kilometres on a front of 45. The decisive blow on the Western Front had not yet been struck; but from this moment onwards to the end of the war, without exception, the Allies continued to advance and the Germans to retreat.

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During these tremendous days the British, French, American and Italian Munitions authorities had been in continuous conference in Paris. The distant rumble of the cannonade and the dull crash of the half-hourly Bertha shells reminded us that the campaign of 1918 was going on. But all our work was concerned with 1919. The provision and division of steel, of coal, of nitrate; the manufacture of artillery, shells, machine-guns, tanks, aeroplanes, poison gas, upon the greatest possible scale and under the most harmonious arrangements kept us, and the enormous technical staffs we directed, at the Conference table every day and all day. And of course while the battle hung in the balance I waited ready to set in motion, if it must be so, the far-reaching, elaborate scheme for evacuating and reconstituting the Paris munition factories in which we were concerned. In the last week of July we were invited to take a day off and visit the scene of the victory. Passing through Château-Thierry and along the pulverized front, we repaired to Mangin's headquarters at Versigny. We approached the General's house



through a long avenue of captured German cannon and trench mortars. Mangin received us with cordiality. His modest bearing did not conceal his joy. After luncheon I found myself alone with him, and knowing the ups and downs which he had survived, I offered some few words of admiration upon his signal victory. I record his reply exactly as he gave it: 'Le Maréchal Foch l'a conçue. Le Général Gouraud l'a rendue possible. Moi, je l'ai faite.' Some years afterwards when I repeated these words to General Gouraud, he considered them for an appreciable moment and then said: 'That is quite true.' And indeed I think they may well serve as an epitome of this memorable event.

Unseen upon the surface, the turn of the tide had now begun. Nevertheless Ludendorff persevered, and the Crown Prince and his staff were found capable of stemming the French inroad on their flank. The divisions which would have backed the drive on Paris rapidly formed a front to the French counter-stroke; and after the first surprise very few more kilometres were taken away from the stubborn enemy. In a fortnight of hard fighting the Germans skilfully extricated their masses of men and material from the perilous Marne salient. But Rupprecht, whose hammer was actually uplifted in Flanders, was frozen where he stood. At first it was a mere postponement: a week or two while the German position in the Marne salient was re-organized. And then a few divisions were taken from his army to help in the re-organization; and then a few more; and then another week's delay. Thus Rupprecht remained for twenty days, waiting for the signal. But the signal never came. The scale in which the struggling armies and the nations behind them were weighed had tilted. The inclination was imperceptible to the public eye, but the controlling minds of the German Headquarters registered a definite sensation.

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But now an event was to occur which would resolve all doubts. 'August 8,' writes Ludendorff, 'was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war. . . . The 8th of August opened the eyes of the staff on both sides; mine were certainly opened. . . . The Emperor told me later on, after the failure of the July offensive and after August 8, he knew the war could be no longer won.'

On July 24 the only conference ever held between the Allied Commanders took place at Bombon. Foch presented to Haig, Pershing and Pétain a document setting forth in outline his policy for the rest of the year. His plans may be shortly described as follows:—First, to reduce the three principal

salients on the enemy's front—Amiens, Château-Thierry and St. Mihiel—with a view to improving for the campaign of 1919 the lateral railway communications along the whole front from the Vosges Mountains to the sea, and by a subsidiary action to free the Bruay coalfield, and certain other minor enterprises. Secondly, if successful in these operations, to carry out a general offensive with all the troops available. It is said that he had among his intimates already begun to dwell on the hope of obtaining final victory in 1918. His favourite expression at this time was 'L'édifice commence à craquer. Tout le monde à la bataille !' On the other hand his memorandum stated that it would depend on the measure of success gained in these various operations whether that success could be more fully exploited 'before the winter sets in.' All his plans aimed at the summer of 1919. In August, when asked when the war would end, his official answer was 'about next autumn—in twelve months'; and as late as the middle of October his Staff made the answer 'in the spring.'

The British Headquarters had been agreeably surprised by the success of Mangin's counter-stroke. Their scepticism was however fortified by the failure of the French, in spite of the initial surprise of July 18, to make effective progress against the Germans in the Château-Thierry salient or to prevent the Crown Prince from extricating his troops from their dangerous position. Nevertheless Haig was resolute for attack, and entirely agreed with the Generalissimo upon the immediate practical steps. He had as early as July 13 directed Rawlinson to prepare an offensive by the Fourth Army against the German salient before Amiens. Rawlinson's plans were in consequence well advanced. He had accepted with logic and conviction the whole model of a Tank battle. There were available in all nearly 600 tanks, of which, apart from spare machines, 96 were supply tanks, 22 gun carriers and 420 fighting tanks. Of the fighting tanks 324 were of the new Mark 5 pattern of superior speed and manœuvring power, and weighed over thirty tons apiece. Everything was subordinated to the surprise of the tank attack. One hundred and twenty brigades of British artillery of all natures were assembled, but all preliminary bombardment was prohibited. Not a shot was to be fired even for registration. The tanks were to advance, unfettered and unprejudiced, simultaneously with the infantry and about 200 yards behind the creeping barrage. Their approach was assisted by special noise barrages, by the morning mist, and by artificial fog. The British heavy and medium artillery was mainly to be directed upon the enemy's similar guns. The infantry, closely accompanied by numerous field batteries and with large bodies of cavalry at hand, were to

exploit the success of the tanks. The essence of the whole plan was surprise. Rawlinson's army had a restricted position of assembly, and German counter-preparation, if it caught our troops in the act of assembling, would have serious results. For these reasons Rawlinson did not wish to fight hand in hand with the French on his right. He feared lest secrecy should be endangered by a joint operation. Moreover, Debency's French army had few tanks and could not attack without artillery preparation. To ensure complete co-operation Foch placed all the troops, British and French, under Sir Douglas Haig. The danger lest the French preliminary bombardment should spoil the surprise was overcome by timing the French infantry attack three-quarters of an hour later than the British. Thus not a shot would be fired before zero. On the second and third days of the battle the rest of Debency's army and Humbert's army were in succession to intervene.

At 4.20 a.m. on August 8, in the half light of a misty dawn, the British tanks rolled forward into No Man's Land, and simultaneously the Allied artillery opened fire. Four Canadian, four Australian and two British divisions, followed by three more in reserve and the Cavalry Corps, advanced on the British front. Eight French divisions co-operated later in *échelon* on their right. All along the line, but especially in the centre where the Canadians and Australians fought, victory declared itself forthwith. Ludendorff had taken special measures to strengthen the German line. 'In this storm-centre,' he writes, 'the divisional fronts were narrow, artillery was plentiful, and the trench system was organized in depth. All experience gained on the 18th July had been acted upon.' It was of no avail. The Germans were unable to resist the tanks. 'Six battle-worthy divisions' collapsed almost immediately before forces scarcely superior in numbers. In less than two hours 16,000 prisoners and more than 200 guns were taken by the British, and by noon tanks and armoured motor cars, followed by cavalry, were scouring the country 14 kilometres behind the German front. The French, who attacked without tanks, advanced about half as far. But the British advance enabled Chaumes junction to be brought under close fire and consequently destroyed the German communications on which their whole front from Montdidier to Lassigny depended. This was decisive. Two days later, when Humbert's army joined the battle, the high ground near Lassigny was found abandoned; and the advance of the Allies was general along a front of 120 kilometres.

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<sup>1</sup> Ludendorff.

I spent the 9th and 10th on this battlefield. I had been at the War Cabinet the day before when Sir Henry Wilson had announced the opening of the attack, and when in the afternoon the first reports of a great Tank victory began to come through, I decided to get into my aeroplane and take a couple of days' holiday. Rawlinson's Headquarters were at Flixicourt, near Amiens. I was much delayed in reaching them by enormous columns of German prisoners which endlessly streamed along the dusty roads. No one who has been a prisoner of war himself can be indifferent to the lot of the soldier whom the fortunes of war condemn to this plight. The woe-begone expression of the Officers contrasted sharply with the almost cheerful countenances of the rank and file. All had passed through a severe experience, the crashing bombardment, the irresistible on-rush of the tanks spurring machine gun bullets from every unexpected quarter, the catastrophe of surrender, the long march from the battlefield with many claims to consideration in front of theirs, night in the advanced cages—now another long march since dawn. 'A la guerre, comme à la guerre !'

The General received me with his customary good humour, and at luncheon, while the tramp of new columns of prisoners proclaimed his victory, explained how it had been achieved. It was, truly, *his* victory, and that of the Fourth Army which he directed. He had put aside old-fashioned ideas, he had used new weapons as they should be used, he had reaped swift and rich reward.

This is perhaps the place where I may give the reader some slight impression of Sir Henry Rawlinson. I had known him since Omdurman, where he was one of Kitchener's leading Staff Officers. In the Great War we had met in every variety of fortune. First on the Aisne in September, 1914, before he had any command at all, when we lay on an unfinished haystack watching the shells play on the Soissons road: next at Antwerp, where he arrived to take over the command at the moment when further defence had become extremely questionable: next in my room at the Admiralty, after the Seventh Division under his command had been virtually destroyed in the first battle of Ypres and when many were ready to lay blame on his tactics. In April, 1918, I had been with him at Dury in the last extremes of the 21st March, when with a few cavalry and machine guns and details from the training establishments, he was covering and enduring the dissolution of the Fifth Army. Now we met at the zenith of his career, when he had largely by his personal contribution gained a battle which we now know ranks among the decisive episodes of war.

During these vicissitudes he was always the same. In the best



of fortunes or the worst, in the most dangerous and hopeless position or on the crest of the wave, he was always the same tough, cheery gentleman and sportsman. He had always the same welcome for a friend, be he highly or lowly placed, and the same keen, practical, resolute outlook on facts however they might be marshalled. The readers of Rawlinson's 'History of Assyria' and another Rawlinson's 'Herodotus' will trace with confidence the hereditary source of his strongly-marked capacity.

The battle was still in full blast and I asked how best to see it. There is a road well known to the Royal Air Force which runs straight as a die for 50 kilometres due East from Amiens to Vermand. 'It is being shelled, but there is no congestion, you can go ahead along it as far as you care.' So off we went along this famous road, through deserted, battered, ghostly Amiens; through Villers-Bretonneux, a heap of smouldering wreckage, threading our way through the intervals of an endless convoy which moved slowly forward from one shell-hammered point to another. The battlefield had all its tales to tell. The German dead lay everywhere, but scattered in twos and threes and half-dozens over a very wide area. Rigid in their machine-gun nests, white flaccid corpses, lay those faithful legionaries of the Kaiser who had tried to stem the rout of 'six battle-worthy German divisions.' A British war balloon overhead burst into a sheet of fire, from which tiny black figures fell in parachutes. Cavalry cantered as gaily over the reconquered territory as if they were themselves the cause of victory. By a small wood seven or eight Tanks with scattered German dead around them lay where a concealed battery had pierced them, twisted and scorched by the fierce petrol fires in which they had perished. 'Crews nearly all burned to death,' said the Officer of the burying party. 'Those still alive are the worst off.'

Finally where bullets began to cut the leafage and freshly wounded men streamed back from an advancing fighting line, an Australian soldier said: 'It's the best we've ever had. We went hard all day yesterday, but this morning we have been relieved, and an *Imperial brigade*' (note the phrasing) 'is now attacking.'

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE TEUTONIC COLLAPSE

*. . . and from the charge they drew,  
As mountain waves, from wasted lands,  
Sweep back to ocean blue.'*

SCOTT, *Marmion*.

Endurance—After Jena—The Chance of Retreat—Impedimenta—Foch and Haig—The Battle of Bapaume—Its Consequences—Inadequate Recognition at Home—The Cabinet View—The General Vindicated—A 1919 Climax—My Letter to the Prime Minister—Artillery—Air—Tanks—The Drocourt-Quéant Switch—Ludendorff's captured Order—The First Sure Sign.

**B**EFORE the war it had seemed incredible that such terrors and slaughters, even if they began, could last more than a few months. After the first two years it was difficult to believe that they would ever end. We seemed separated from the old life by a measureless gulf. The adaptive genius of man had almost habituated him to the horrors of his new environment. Far away shone a pale star of home and peace; but all around the storm roared with unabated and indeed increasing fury. Year after year every optimist had been discredited, every sober hope cast down, and the British nation had doggedly resigned itself to pursue its task without inquiry when the end would come. In the circles of Government, where so many plans had to be made for more than a year ahead, this mood formed the subconscious foundation of our thoughts. Ultimate victory seemed certain. But how it would come, and whether it would come in 1919 or in 1920, or later, were inquiries too speculative to pursue amid the imperious needs of each day. Still less would anyone dare to hope for peace in 1918. Nevertheless, when from time to time the mental eye fell upon these puzzles, this question immediately presented itself: Would Germany collapse all of a sudden as she had done after Jena, or would she fight it out to the bitter end like the French under Napoleon or the Confederates under Lee? The Great War came when both sides were confident of victory. Would it continue after one side was sure it had no hope? Was it in the German nature, so valiant yet at the same time so logical, to fight on in revengeful despair? Should we have a year of battle on the Rhine, the march to Berlin, the breaking up of the armies

in the open field, the subjugation of the inhabitants ; or would there be some intense nervous spasm, some overwhelming and almost universal acceptance of defeat and all that defeat involved ? We had always fancied it would be Jena. But all our plans were for a long-drawn alternative.

Certainly the highest interests of Germany, once all hope of victory was closed, required the orderly retreat of the greater part of her armies to the Antwerp-Meuse line, and thence to the German frontier. To secure this at all costs became, after the battle of August 8, and the conclusions drawn from it by the rulers of Germany, the paramount duty of soldiers and statesmen, and of all parties and classes. Moreover, such a retreat could assuredly have been accomplished, provided the decision was immediate. Apart from all the methods of delaying a pursuit which tactics and strategy suggest, the Germans possessed at this time a simple mechanical device, the full use of which would with certainty have gained them a breathing space until the spring of 1919. They had developed time fuses for exploding mines or shells, which could be regulated to retard the explosion, not merely for days or weeks, but actually for many months. It would therefore have been possible for the retreating invaders to have sown the roads and railways behind them with mines and buried shells so that they would be continually destroyed day after day by a fresh and inexhaustible series of explosions at points and moments which their pursuers could never foresee. The only method of dealing with a railway thus mined would be to build an entirely new line out of such material as could be salvaged alongside the original. It would therefore not have been possible for the Allied armies to advance to the German frontiers until they had reconstructed the whole intervening railway system. This could certainly not have been completed before the end of the year. Not till then could the process of dragging forward the ponderous mass of material necessary to mount a grand offensive have even been begun.

There might therefore have been gained for Germany a period of perhaps six months before the full strength of the Allied armies could have been brought to bear upon her frontiers and before she was exposed to actual invasion. The time was sufficient for strong positions to be selected and prepared, and for the whole remaining resources of the nation to be marshalled in defence of its territory. But far more important than any military advantage was the effect which Germany, by admitting defeat and withdrawing completely from France and Belgium, would have produced upon the cohesion and driving power of the Allies. The liberation of the soil of France was the dominating impulse which held the French people to the war. The rescue of Belgium was

still the main rallying point of the British war resolve. Had Germany therefore removed both these motives, had she stood with arms in her hands on the threshold of her own land ready to make a defeated peace, to cede territory, to make reparation ; ready also if all negotiation were refused to defend herself to the utmost, and capable of inflicting two million casualties upon the invader, it seemed, and seems, almost certain that she would not have been put to the test. The passion for revenge ran high, and stern was the temper of the Allies ; but retribution, however justified, would not in the face of real peace offers have been in itself a sufficient incentive to lead the great war-wearied nations into another year of frightful waste and slaughter. In the lull and chill of the winter with the proud foe suing for terms and with all his conquests already abandoned, a peace by negotiation was inevitable. Even in this last phase Germany need not have placed herself in the appalling position of yielding to the discretion of those upon whom she had inflicted the utmost injuries of hate.

Many factors and influences were no doubt simultaneously at work upon those who still ruled Germany. But it is probable that the last chance was lost for a very inadequate reason. The German Headquarters could not make up its mind to face the consequences of a swift and immediate retreat. Foch is reported to have said at the end of August, pointing to the war map : ' This man (the German) could still escape if he did not mind leaving his luggage behind him.' The immense masses of munitions and war stores of all kinds which the Germans had in four years accumulated in France and Belgium became a fatal encumbrance. The German Staff could not bear to sacrifice them. Their railways soon became congested with mountainous impedimenta. Meanwhile the supreme policy of the State was paralysed, and the hard-strained fighting front began to quiver and rock and crack.

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It is possible in these pages to do little more than mention the series of great and bloody battles and other events by which the German armies were now to be driven out of France and Belgium and the German Empire into collapse, unconditional surrender and internal revolution. The victory of August 8 was no sooner ended, than both Foch and Haig sought to renew the attack. But some divergence arose upon the method and direction. Foch's Directive of August 10 prescribed the immediate advance of Rawlinson's Fourth British and Debeney's First French Armies towards the Somme in the general direction of Ham. The Third French Army was ordered to prolong the attack and profit by the advance of the First ; and Haig was directed to launch at the earliest moment the British Third Army (Byng, lying northward

of the Fourth) in an offensive towards Bapaume and Péronne. Haig had other ideas. He did not consider a further immediate advance towards the Somme by Rawlinson and Debeney practicable. The hostile artillery fire, he said, had greatly increased. The enemy had established themselves in their old front line of 1914-15, which was still in good order and well wired. The ground was broken and unsuitable for tanks. At least sixteen German divisions were holding this sector of the front. In these circumstances and after personal inspection, Haig directed that the attack should be postponed until the heavy guns could be brought forward and a full artillery battle mounted. He was however in complete accord with the attack of the British Third Army, and had in fact upon his own initiative given orders to General Byng before the issue of Foch's Directive of the 10th. He now planned to use the right of the British First Army (Horne) as well.

Foch reiterated his instructions on August 14. He saw no need to delay the Rawlinson-Debeney frontal attack till Byng could participate. He had not considered the possibility of using Horne. Haig continued to refuse to attack until his artillery preparation was complete. 'Nothing,' he said, 'had happened to cause him to alter his opinion . . . He declined to change his orders to either of the armies in question.' Meanwhile he was rapidly and secretly transferring his reserves to Byng and reinforcing Horne with the fresh and powerful Canadian Corps. In short, Foch called for a continuance of the frontal attack south of the Somme, and Haig insisted on opening a new and wider battle to the north (on the front Monchy-le-Preux-Miramaumont). The difference between the two plans was fundamental. A conference was held at Sarcus on the 15th. Haig adhered to his intentions, and though 'observing a most friendly tone,' emphasized his 'sole responsibility to his Government and fellow-citizens for the handling of the British forces.' Foch saw no headway could be made, and submitted. In his Directive issued after the conference he accepted the British plan and its argument. But he withdrew forthwith the First French Army from Sir Douglas Haig, and from noon on August 16 it reverted to the command of General Pétain.

Haig may have exaggerated the resisting powers of the Germans south of the Somme (on the front Roye-Chaulnes); but his reasons were as solid as his refusal, and the event proved most fortunate. On August 21 the Third British Army began the important battle of Bapaume.<sup>1</sup> Reinforced by 100 tanks and striking south-south-eastward over country not unsuited—as would have been the crater fields of the Somme—to the operations of these sovereign

<sup>1</sup> See general map on p. 1395.

weapons, General Byng pressed back the German line. The German Seventeenth Army, on whom the onset fell, was disposed three miles behind a false front on the Gouraud model. This Army counter-attacked along the whole line on the 22nd. But the British having themselves warily engaged at first only a part of their forces, strongly reinforced their assault, beat off the counter-attack and maintained their forward movement. Albert was recovered on the 22nd, and on the 23rd Haig was able to order a general advance on a 33-mile front. The battle was unrelentingly contested, but the British progress was continuous. On the 26th the right of the British First Army from Arras intervened and added another 7 miles to the breadth of the attack, which thus became the longest unbroken front of any offensive battle yet fought in the West. The Fourth Army was also by now in motion again.

That same day, yielding to the pressure from the north, the Germans retired from Roye and fell back to the line of the Somme. Thus the immediate objective which Marshal Foch demanded, and would have sought through a frontal attack of the Fourth British Army, was gained automatically by the attack of the Third. The ruins of Bapaume were retrieved on the 29th. From Péronne to Noyon the Germans stood fast; but on the night of August 30-31, the 2nd Australian Division by a remarkable feat of arms captured Mont St. Quentin, the key of Péronne, and thus compromised the whole of the river line. Péronne changed hands again on September 1. On the 2nd, the left of the British First Army came into the battle, and with the Canadian Corps and the British 4th Division, after a bloody conflict, broke through in the north the strong system of entrenchments known as the 'Drocourt-Quéant switch.' Whereupon the Germans abandoned the whole line of the Somme, and from the Oise River to the Sensée retreated towards the Hindenburg Line.

This great British drive may be said to have ended on September 3, by which date the three British armies and particularly the Third Army had advanced on their wide fronts an average of 20 miles, and had captured 53,000 German prisoners and 470 German guns. The German movements, not only during this battle, but till the end of the war, resembled those of a squad of soldiers trying to align themselves by their right, and kept in a continual shuffle by the fact that their right-hand man was himself thrust violently backward by British pressure, every time they tried to take up their correct position.

Mangin's Tenth Army had meanwhile pressed with increasing force north-east through Soissons; and although neither the scale nor the results of his operations were so large as those of the British, the double movement was followed by the general retreat

of the German centre. Thus the rest of the Fourth British Army and the First and Third French armies on its right moved forward abreast without heavy losses, and by September 3 the Allied front stood along a line running almost north and south from below Douai to the gates of La Fère. The success of the British attacks exceeded Foch's imperious expectations, and with a magnanimity not always exhibited by great Commanders he was unrestrained in his approval. He sent General Du Cane to tell Sir Douglas Haig that 'the operations of the British Army in August and the early part of September would serve as a model for all time.' But these operations were by no means at an end.

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It was galling to the British Headquarters, justly conscious of the predominant part which our armies were beginning to play in these great successes, to find the credit ascribed by their own Cabinet and public opinion to Marshal Foch. The part the Prime Minister had played in establishing unity of command led him unconsciously to dwell upon the brilliant conceptions of the Generalissimo, and to view only in a half light the *potent forward* heave of the British Army without which the results would have been mediocre. The Press and public at home followed the lead thus given, and the prevailing impression during these months—and never since effectually corrected—was that after many disasters and much mismanagement, an extraordinary genius had obtained the supreme command and had almost instantaneously converted defeat into victory. Care has been taken in this account to describe some of the splendid decisions on which the fame of Marshal Foch is founded; but this in no way diminishes the services in this campaign of the British Commander-in-Chief. His armies bore the lion's share in the victorious advance, as they had already borne the brunt of the German assault. Foch took a wider survey because he had a higher sphere. It was Haig's duty to take a more restricted view.

'Act well thy part; there all the honour lies.'

But nevertheless, as has been and will be shown, on more than one cardinal occasion Haig by strenuous insistence deflected the plans of the Supreme Commander with results which were glorious. And ever his shot-pierced divisions, five times decimated within the year, strode forward with discipline, with devotion and with gathering momentum.

Reaction from the mood in fashion at home led the British Headquarters into some disparagement of the French contribution to the final advance. In this they were as far from the truth in one direction as their own Government in the other. In the

victorious period from July to November 11, the French suffered no less than 531,000 casualties themselves, and inflicted 414,000 upon the enemy. That an army and a nation engaged at their full strength from the beginning of the war, which had sustained 700,000 casualties in the first few weeks and nearly 3 millions in the first three years, should have been capable of so noble an effort at the end will ever command the admiration and gratitude of their Ally.

None of the British Authorities, military or civilian, at home or in France, was induced by these remarkable victories to predict an early end of the war. General Headquarters, Sir Henry Wilson, the Imperial War Cabinet, the Prime Minister, all proceeded rigorously upon the belief that another most severe campaign would be necessary in 1919. For this every preparation continued to be made on the largest scale by the Ministry of Munitions. The War Cabinet were concerned lest Haig should be drawn by the successes of his army into enterprises beyond the strength of troops who had suffered so much. The Hindenburg Lines, might well, they feared, not without excuse, become the scene of another Passchendaele. The state of our Man Power, with men of fifty already summoned to the colours and the standards of physical fitness lowered to a harsh point, made the maintenance of the armies in 1919, on a scale of sixty Divisions, a problem of extreme difficulty. Another three or four hundred thousand men shorn away would compel a melancholy contraction in the number of British Divisions available for 1919, which it now seemed not unreasonable to hope would be the final and decisive year. The Cabinet therefore at the end of August sent their Commander-in-Chief a message warning him of the grave consequences which would result from a further heavy blood drain. The 'Staff Officer' writes some unpleasantly turned sentences about this improper interference with the prerogatives of the High Command, and the pitiful inability of politicians to face casualties with a hearty spirit.

The Cabinet acted only in accord with prudence and duty in their intervention. Nevertheless Haig at this time held a truer view both of the deterioration of the Germans and of the resilience of his own army. He shared the military doctrines of Foch. Both these illustrious soldiers had year after year conducted with obstinacy and serene confidence offensives which we now know to have been as hopeless as they were disastrous. But the conditions had now changed. Both were now provided with offensive weapons, which the military science of neither would have conceived. The German losses in Ludendorff's attacks had affected alike the number and quality of the enemy. The swift and ceaseless inflow of the Americans turned the balance of Man Power



heavily in favour of the Allies ; there was at last enough artillery for formidable attacks to be delivered against almost any part of the hostile line. The Goddess of Surprise had at last returned to the Western Front. Thus both Haig and Foch were vindicated in the end. They were throughout consistently true to their professional theories, and when in the fifth campaign of the war the facts began for the first time to fit the theories, they reaped their just reward.

I was at this time so often at the Front and in such agreeable relations with the Headquarters, British and French, that I was able to appreciate to some extent the new conditions. Sir Douglas Haig's conviction that the British armies would continue to drive the Germans from their successive lines was intense. In his train at Frévent in the closing stages of the Battle of Bapaume, he showed me the order he had just given for three British armies to attack simultaneously; and pointing to the German lines, Siegfried, Wotan, Brunhilde, Hindenburg, etc., with which the map was scored, he said: ' Now you will see what all these fortifications are worth when troops are no longer resolved to defend them.'

I now began to do a good deal of my business at Château Verchocq. The munitions organization was working so easily that I had plenty of time to see and to think. My central problem was founded on Tonnage, and its offspring—Steel. The second issue was the apportionment between present needs and future preparation. Of this I was not the arbiter, but I had at least the influence which comes from the right to marshal the facts and to state the case. Like the rest of us I was still living in the future rather than in the terrific present ; but after what I had seen and learned with the armies, the future meant at the worst 1919. To make sure of winning then, if we did not win before, and to concentrate on 1919 to the deep detriment of more remote periods, seemed certainly right. The reader, who now knows what actually happened and takes it all for granted, may be surprised that such issues were ever balanced. But at the time we had no right to count upon a Jena collapse. Even in famine the seed corn must be preserved. On September 5, I wrote for the Cabinet as follows:

## TO THE WAR CABINET

### MUNITIONS POLICY.

1. The extremely important paper written by the Chief of the Staff on the 25th July [not printed here] affirms the conviction that the German armies in the West could be decisively defeated in the summer of 1919, provided that we selected a climax, concentrated every available resource upon it, and subordinated intervening events to it. The method of

mechanical attack was also set out by the General Staff, and our preparations to produce the necessary vehicles are at hand. The brilliant successes which have been gained, almost without intermission, since General Wilson's paper was written, reveal the justice of the above conception, with which, I may mention, General Pétain seems to be in the most complete accord. No doubt it is right to exploit to the full the present favourable situation, and we need not exclude the possibility of results being achieved of a very far-reaching character. On the assumption however that these results are not decisive, and that the winter closes down with an unbroken German front in the West, we ought now to have reached definite conclusions as to the character of next year's campaign. The questions involved affect directly every arrangement for munitions supply and manpower. All these questions can be settled harmoniously if they are related to some central design, if for the first time we have a definite war policy towards which every part of our organization contributes.

After arguments designed to exclude any reservations in favour of 1920, I continued:

2. The policy of aiming at victory next year would appear to require *inter alia* the following measures:—

- (a) The bringing over of the largest possible number of American troops.
- (b) In order to encourage the above, we must do our very utmost to arm, equip, and clothe them in advance of their own war industries.
- (c) All works of construction which cannot yield a war result during the period of climax in 1919 should be rigorously pruned.
- (d) Every effort should be made during the winter to accumulate munitions, and further releases from the munitions works should be stopped during that period; but in the early spring of 1919 large releases should again begin from the munitions works, and for this purpose our reserves of ammunition, filled and unfilled, should be decidedly drawn upon.
- (e) From March onwards every effort should be concentrated in the shipyards on vessels nearing completion, and there should be a definite diminution in the starting of new work or of long-dated work. A substantial contribution of men from Admiralty industries of all kinds should be made in time for them to reach the field trained during the battle period.
- (f) The release of coal-miners from the mines should be

- renewed in the early spring, agreeably to the diminution in the output of munitions, and we should be prepared to run considerable risks in the winter of 1919 in coal supply in the effort of making victory certain.
- (g) It should be possible for the Navy to assist during the period of the decisive battle by releasing temporarily sailors and marines to strengthen the Army. There could be no better form for a naval contribution than to supply the men necessary to steer and manage, say, the last 2,000 British tanks to be completed before the battle.
  - (h) The Air Force should conform in its development to the policy of a climax, *i.e.*, all establishments in this country should be cut down to the minimum during the decisive period. The Aerial Home Defence in all its forms should be temporarily cut down. The long periods of training and preparation which intervene between the handing over of machines and the formation of squadrons should in regard to the last batch of squadrons that can be completed in time be deliberately curtailed.
  - (i) The people of the country as a whole should be taught to look for a climax and work for it. They would then be found to be ready to make very great sacrifices to secure victory, even if this involved a far harder state of life than anything we have yet experienced.

*To the Prime Minister.*

CHATEAU VERCHOCQ,

*September 9, 1918.*

Before I can make definite proposals about steel, and consequently coal, I must first have the whole Munitions programme for 1919 worked out; and secondly I must know what the Americans are really going to require of us. The programme is now completed in draft, and I have made certain proposed reductions, the effects of which are being examined this week. I am to see the Americans in Paris on Wednesday or Thursday. When this is completed I shall be able to provide the Cabinet with a definite basis on which any necessary decision can be taken.

I have however been looking into the question of ammunition expenditure out here under the new conditions which the War has taken, and I regret to say that, so far from offering hopes of reductions, there is every sign of increased demand. For instance, in each of the last two weeks of open fighting on the

wide battle front they have fired over 70,000 tons, and they are now asking for a daily intake of over 9,000 tons against 5,000, 6,000 and 7,000 with which we have been able to satisfy them to date. It appears that although the prolonged bombardments, like Messines, etc., have been given up, the firing is now maintained by all the guns of the army over practically the whole front at once. The old limiting factor, namely the fatigue of the gunners, which imposed a certain limitation on the concentrated local operations of last year, is no longer present when all, or almost all, the batteries of the army are able to fire over the whole front. It would of course be quite impossible to continue to supply ammunition at the present rate indefinitely, and I do not think that will be demanded of us; but in view of the hopes in which I indulged when we last discussed this matter, I thought you ought to know at the earliest moment that very heavy demands, backed by very solid reasons, will come from the army for next year. In addition to this, if the prospects of a forward move mature, we shall have a largely increased demand for rails. I do not think it is impossible to satisfy both demands within reason, provided the right measures are taken, and provided the Admiralty bear their share in the consequent reductions.

To a certain extent coal can be economized if more tonnage can be given. For instance, every ton of steel I can get from the United States will save at least 4 tons of coal, and more if we use it in substitution of making steel from low grade British ores. It is really therefore impossible for me to make definite proposals about steel and coal without hearing definitely from the Shipping Controller what he is going to do for us next year. All this is going forward, and I deprecate a hasty decision on any one part of the programme until a general view can be taken. We are beginning these discussions much earlier this year than we did last year, and a fortnight or three weeks spent in getting all the cards on the table at once will certainly not be wasted. My own feeling is that there will be enough to meet all reasonable needs.

There is a considerable set-back here against the Air. There is no doubt that the demands of the Air Force on men and material are thought to be much in excess of the fighting results produced. There is no doubt that if Haig had to choose between 50,000 men for the Infantry and 50,000 men for the Air Force, he would choose 50,000 men for the Infantry. The reason is not that a man in the air is not worth more than a foot soldier, but that a man in the Air Force is not a man in the air, and that from 50 to 100 men are required in the Air Force for every one man fighting in the air. The magnificent

performances and efficiency of the squadrons cannot be accepted as the final test. Everything ought to pay a proportionate dividend on the capital invested, and it is from this point of view that the Air Force should be tested. How much flying, for instance, is done by the Royal Naval Air Service for the 45,000 first-rate fighting men and skilled men they employ? How many bombs are dropped? How many submarines are sunk? How many flights are made? How many Germans are killed for the enormous expenditure of national energy and material involved? Again, take the balloons and the airships. Let a similar test be applied to them. You really cannot afford to let any part of your organization fail in this culminating period to produce continuously war results equal to its demand on the public resources.

I do not think tanks would suffer by this comparison. At any rate, I am very ready they should be subjected to it. Up to the present there have only been about 18,000 men in the Tank Corps, and they have only had 600 or 700 tanks to use in action. It is universally admitted out here that they have been a definite factor in changing the fortune of the field and in giving us that *tactical* superiority, without which the best laid schemes of strategists come to naught. It is no exaggeration to say that the lives they have saved and the prisoners they have taken have made these 18,000 men the most profit-bearing we have in the army. As for the demand which tanks have made up to the present on material and skilled labour, it is indeed a very modest one. I am having graphics prepared which will illustrate these facts. It has now been settled to raise the tanks to 35,000 men. This is only about half what will be needed for the tanks I shall actually have ready by the summer of next year. Although my outputs [at present] are only about half what I had expected, General Elles of the Tank Corps tells me 'that the tanks they have will see out the tank men this year.' The tank men are killed and wounded in considerable numbers, and the permanent wastage of the personnel is high, whereas the tank in any victorious battle recovers very quickly from his wounds and hardly ever dies beyond the hope of resurrection. A few months' sojourn in the grave is nearly always followed by a reincarnation, so long, that is to say, as he is not snaffled by the powers of evil. Apart from the above, the fatigue on the tank crews in action is very great, and the idea of the same crew working double relays of tanks will certainly not carry us very far.

From the above it is clear to me that you will have large numbers of these invaluable weapons without the men to man them, and that therefore you will be faced with the need of handing

over these unique products of British ingenuity, which properly used would give us a great influence and control over war policy, to our Allies who will not understand how to use them nearly so well as our officers and men would do. I do trust therefore that you will not quit the opinions which you held so strongly a few months ago, and in consequence of which preparations have already far advanced on an important scale. Although it is quite true that the Germans will develop their means of attacking tanks by anti-tank rifles as well as by field guns, land mines, etc., there are four new circumstances which will tend to make the tank an invaluable weapon next year. Here they are:—

(1) Greatly increased numbers. They will be able to afford to have a considerable proportion knocked out in each battle and yet have enough left at every point to secure success.

(2) They have never yet developed smoke appliances, with which they are being fitted. Smoke as an aid to the attack, and particularly to tank attack, is only in its infancy. It is going to receive an enormous expansion next year.

(3) They have never yet been used in darkness; but that was the original idea which I had when they were conceived. Hitherto they have not been capable of negotiating the accidents of ground by night, but with better tanks and a proportion, though only a proportion, of larger tanks, night operations will become possible at points where trench warfare has given place to open fighting.

(4) The tactical manœuvring power of the tank and its combined training with infantry are developing fast and will yield immensely improved results. Tanks are not opposed to infantry; they are an intimate and integral part of the infantrymen's strength.

What has made it so difficult to develop a good policy about tanks has been the repeated shifts of opinion for and against them. Every time a new success is gained by their aid, there is an immediate clamour for large numbers. The moment the impression of that success passes away, the necessary men and material are grudged and stinted. I repeat what I said to you in my last letter—that there ought to be nearly 100,000 men in the Tank Corps by the time the programme on which I am working by your express directions is completed.

I spent yesterday on the battle-front, and guided by General Lipsett of the 3rd Canadian Division, went over a large part of the ground taken by us beyond Monchy. I walked over the Drocourt-Quéant line and went on up to the extreme high watermark of our attack. I noticed several remarkable things. The Drocourt-Quéant trench was strongly held with Germans,

and it was a very fine, strong, deep trench. In front of it was a belt of wire nearly 100 yards broad. This wire was practically uncut and had only little passages through it, all presumably swept by machine guns. Yet the troops walked over these terrific obstacles, without the wire being cut, with very little loss, killed many Germans, took thousands of prisoners and hundreds of machine guns. Three or four hundred yards behind these lines was a second line, almost as strong and more deceptive. Over this also they walked with apparently no difficulty and little loss. Behind that again, perhaps a mile farther on, were just a few little pits and holes into which German machine guns and riflemen threw themselves to stop the rout. Here our heaviest losses occurred. The troops had got beyond the support of the tanks, and the bare open ground gave no shelter. In one small space of about 300 yards wide nearly 400 Canadian dead had just been buried, and only a few score of Germans. The moral appears to be training and tanks, short advances on enormous fronts properly organized and repeated at very brief intervals, not losing too many men, not pushing hard where there is any serious opposition except after full preparations have been made. It is the power of being able to advance a reasonable distance day after day remorselessly, rather than making a very big advance in a single day, that we should seek to develop. This power can only be imparted by tanks and cross-country vehicles on the largest scale.

You would have been shocked to see the tragic spectacle of the ground where our attack for the time being withered away. It was just like a line of seaweed and jetsam which is left by a great wave as it recoils.

At the end of September General Birch, Chief of the Artillery, showed me a captured German document which greatly affected my outlook. I drew the attention of the Cabinet to it on September 26 in a note on Ammunition from which the following is an extract:

There is no foundation for the view that the conditions of semi-open warfare which have now supervened in France and the abandonment of the prolonged artillery bombardment previous to assaults will afford us any relief in shell consumption. On the contrary, since this matter was last discussed in Cabinet, the heaviest firings yet recorded have taken place in France during a period of open warfare. For fifteen successive days the expenditure exceeded 10,000 tons a day. These very wide battles, fought on the fronts of two or three British

armies simultaneously, in which almost all the guns in France are employed, use more and not less ammunition than was required for the intense local fighting of Messines, Passchendaele, etc. On the other hand, this great consumption of ammunition is being attended by remarkable results. A recent order of General Ludendorff's which has been captured states that in a single month more than 13 per cent. of the German artillery in the West has been completely destroyed by counter-battery fire. As this method is comparatively little used by the French, the main credit of this astonishing achievement falls to the British Artillery. A superior Artillery supplied with ample ammunition and working in combination with a superior and highly-trained Air Force is thus producing an immense effect, not only in destroying the enemy's power of resistance but in saving our own men. If the destruction of German artillery could be maintained at the rate stated by General Ludendorff, it would become practically necessary to replace the whole of the German artillery in the West, apart altogether from the wear of guns, twice in the course of a year. This would be quite impossible. We are therefore in this field of effort also perhaps within measurable distance of decisive and final results. It would be disastrous if, for any reason, we were compelled to stint our gunners in ammunition at the very time when the result of all the immense efforts which have been made to increase the power and perfect the combination of our Artillery and Air Services is coming to hand. Rather than do that we ought to be ready to make very great sacrifices indeed in every direction.

I do not burden the reader with the further arguments about steel and tonnage to which this extract was the prelude. It carried to my mind the first sure sign that the end was approaching, and faster than we had dared to hope.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### VICTORY

*'The fighting man shall from the sun  
Take warmth, and life from the growing earth;  
Speed with the light-foot wind to run,  
And with the trees to newer birth,  
And find when fighting shall be done,  
Great rest and fullness after dearth.*

*The thundering line of battle stands,  
And in the air Death moans and sings;  
But day shall clasp him with strong hands,  
And night shall fold him in soft wings.'*

JULIAN GRENFELL.

Flanders, April, 1915.

The Culmination of the British War Effort—New Combinations—The German Railway System—The Convergent Attack—The Triple Plan—The Eve of the Triple Battle—The Southern and Northern Attacks—The Centre Battle—The British storm the Hindenburg Line—The Weakest Link—Surrender of Bulgaria—The Final Battles—Breaking Strain—The Armistice Terms—The Eleventh Hour—German Military Effort—The Future Hope.

THE war was now entered upon its final phase. During the year 1918, the effort of Britain and of the British Empire reached its highest pitch. The Imperial forces in the field against the enemy in all theatres amounted to four and a half million men, and those under arms to nearly six millions. The strength of the Grand Fleet in vessels of every kind reached its maximum, and the Germans were no longer in a condition even to put to sea. The U-boat warfare was defeated and kept down by the operations of nearly 4,000 armed vessels flying the White Ensign. Under the protection of these agencies upwards of two million United States troops were transported across the Atlantic, of which more than half were carried in British ships, and landed in France during the year with hardly any loss of life by enemy action. The British Mercantile Marine of 20,000 vessels maintained the supply of all the British armies and carried without appreciable hindrance all the food and materials needed for the life of the British islands, for their war industries and for any commerce not required for war production. The control of the

seas against the enemy in every quarter of the globe was absolute, and this result was obtained by the employment in the fighting fleets and flotillas, in the Mercantile Marine, in the Naval arsenals and dockyards, and in the shipbuilding yards of over 1,200,000 men. The British munition plants absorbing the labours of nearly two and a half million persons produced all the shell and artillery that the British armies could use, together with every other requisite in increasing abundance. In addition Britain furnished steel, coal, and other war materials in immense quantities to France and Italy, and was preparing, without prejudice to any other obligation, to supply the United States with the whole of the medium artillery required for an Army of eighty divisions for a campaign in 1919. All the preparations had been made, and the process was far advanced of fitting the British armies with technical equipment of every kind for 1919 on a scale in quality and in novelty far superior to any outputs yet achieved. In all there were actually employed under the Crown in the armies, in the fleets and in the war factories, excluding those engaged in the production of food, coal and civil necessities, nearly eight million men and three-quarters of a million women. The financial measures needed to develop and sustain this prodigious manifestation had required in 1918 alone over three thousand million pounds sterling, of which one thousand millions were raised by the taxation of forty-five million persons in the British Isles and sixteen hundred millions were borrowed at home from the same persons and four hundred millions borrowed abroad mainly from the United States on the credit of the British Government.


But it is with the final effort of the British Army that this chapter is chiefly concerned. From the opening of the campaign of 1918 on March 21 down to the Armistice on November 11 the British armies in France suffered 830,000 casualties, and inflicted on the Germans in killed, wounded and prisoners, a comparable loss of 805,000 men. During the same period the French (and Belgians) sustained 964,000 casualties and inflicted 666,000 upon the enemy. Up to July when the tide began definitely to turn, the British armies had already lost during the year chiefly in bearing the brunt of the German attack over 400,000 men. In spite of this loss they were almost continuously engaged in full battle and took from that time onwards at least as many prisoners and guns from the Germans as all the other Allied forces on the Western Front put together.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Great Britain provided the second largest Allied army in the Balkans and terminated the enemy's resistance in German East Africa. Finally,

<sup>1</sup> The above figures do not include the supplementary German casualties set forth in the tables in Chapter II of this Part and in Appendix J.

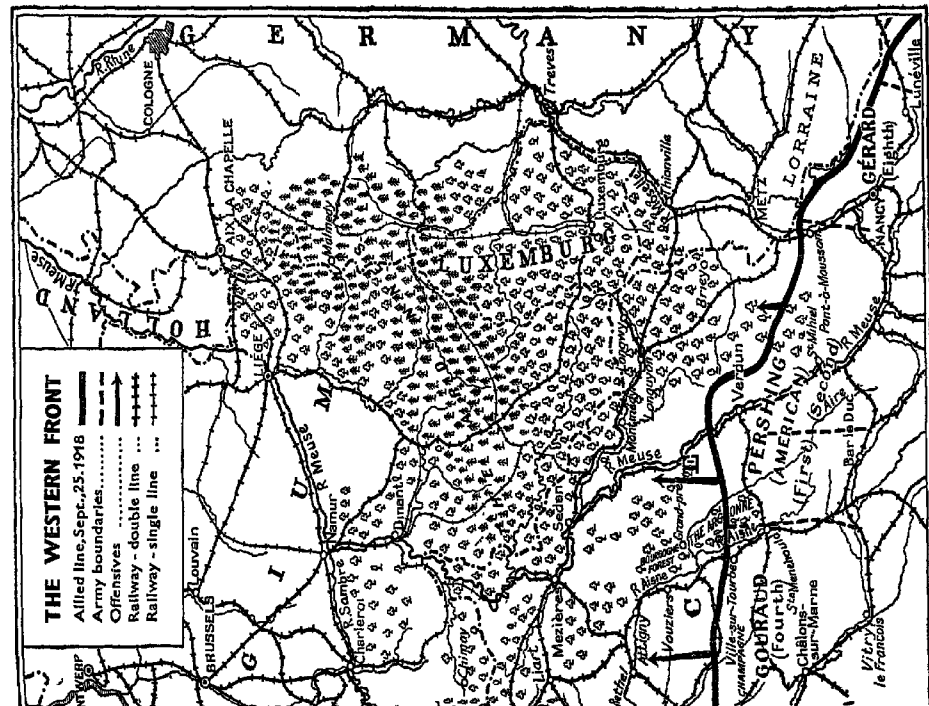
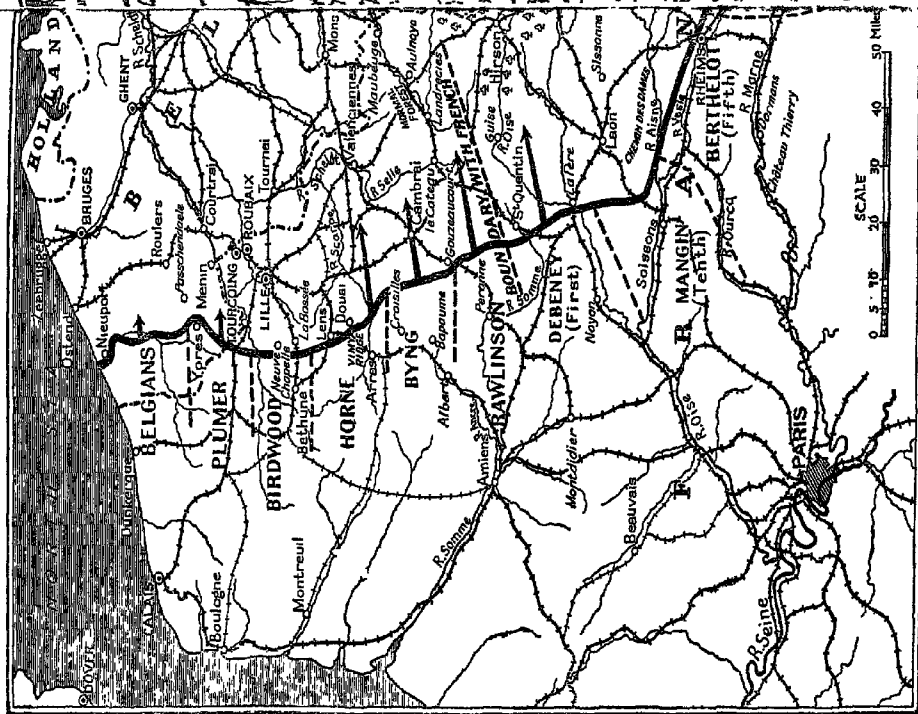
Great Britain and India bore unaided the whole burden of the war against the Turkish Empire, and with an army of over 400,000 men in Mesopotamia and nearly 300,000 men in Palestine, shattered or destroyed three-quarters of the whole remaining Turkish forces and conquered all the regions and provinces in which the operations took place. Such was the culminating war effort of a State which, before the campaign of 1918 began, had already been at war for three and a half years, suffered more than a million and three-quarters casualties, sustained a loss of over six and a half million tons of shipping and expended six thousand millions sterling. These facts and figures will excite the wonder of future generations.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first stage of the Great Advance may be said to have closed on September 3. But once the general success of the Battle of Bapaume was assured, new and even wider combinations were open to Marshal Foch. Of the original projects of biting off the three German salients—Amiens, Château-Thierry, St. Mihiel, and freeing the important lateral railways behind them, the two first and greatest were already accomplished, and the American enterprise against the third—St. Mihiel—was mounted and imminent. These great local operations which at one time had seemed sufficient for the year, could now be followed by a deliberately-conceived combined attempt, involving all the Allied forces, to break up the German front and drive their armies out of France before the winter.

It is now necessary to take a parting glance at the structure of railways on which the German armies in France had depended during the four years of the War. The tap root of their supplies was the main trunk railway (A) from the munition factories of Westphalia through Cologne, Liège, Namur and Maubeuge. Through Maubeuge ran in a crescent shaped **T** (lying thus  the great lateral line (B) on which the invading front was built, viz. the railway from Germany through Metz, Mezières, Hirson, Maubeuge, Mons, Ghent and Bruges. From this railway there branched southward and westward all the lines which with various subsidiary laterals fed the German armies spread fanwise towards Calais, Amiens and Paris. Behind the southern portion lay the rugged forest region of the Ardennes, comparatively roadless and railless, and an impassable barrier to the organized retreat of huge modern armies. The German Army in France was therefore strategically to a large extent 'formed to a flank' along their main lateral communications. If these were broken or they were driven beyond them, the bulk would never get away.

Further, nearly three-quarters of the whole German strength



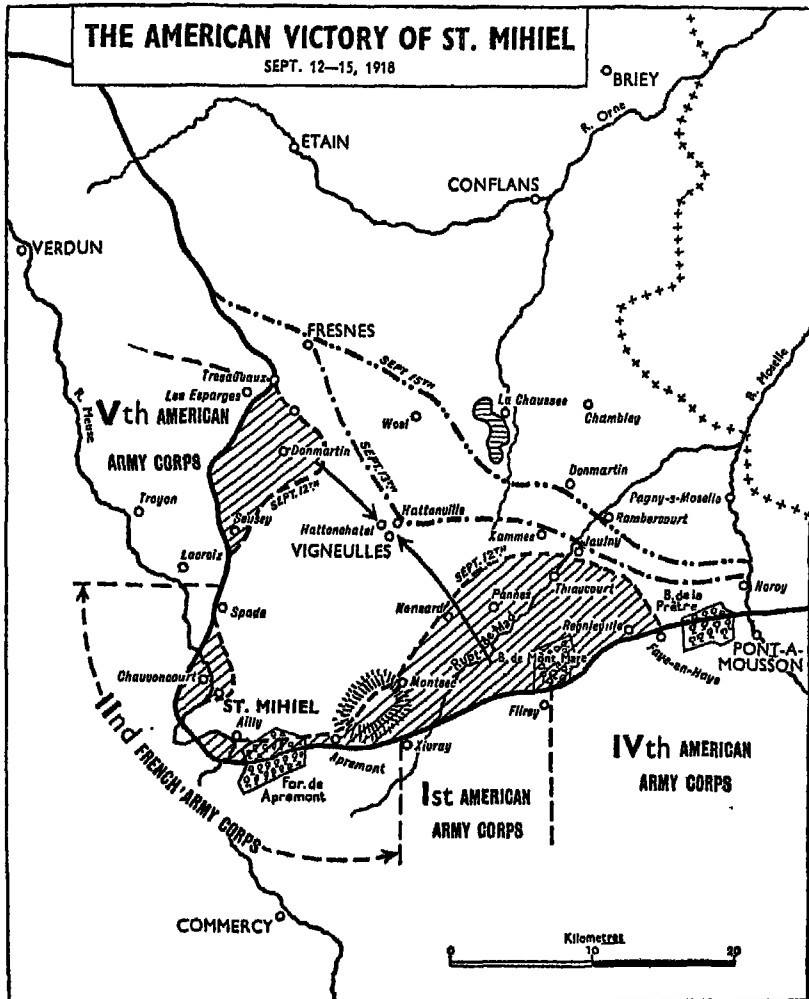
radiated from the lateral arc Mezières-Hirson-Aulnoye-Mons. The railway junctions of Mezières and Aulnoye (near the lost French fortress and railway centre of Maubeuge) were therefore vital organs of the enemy. If these junctions could be captured or paralysed, the immense mass of invaders depending on them, or on the lateral line between them, would be cut off. Hitherto the Germans had not been in any strategic anxiety. The front with its successive systems of defence stood, except before Verdun, 50 miles ahead of the lateral line. But now the front was bending and recoiling fast, and the margin of safety space narrowed day by day.

Lastly it must be remembered that all the traffic from the Flanders front, from the Arras front, from the Somme and the Aisne front, as well as the bulk of that from the Argonne, passed in the end through Liège. This bottle neck was too small to cope with the deluge of retreating stores and munitions, and at the same time to supply the imperative to-and-fro needs of the armies when all were continually in heavy battle.

These considerations dictated the movements of the Allies. It was obvious that apart from Verdun, barred by its inferior communications, the nearest point at which the most deadly blow could be delivered upon the enemy was the junction of Aulnoye near Maubeuge. A British advance against the enemy's front, Cambrai-St. Quentin, in the direction of Maubeuge would if successful compromise and compel the early retreat of all the hostile armies deployed with the Ardennes at their back between Maubeuge and Verdun. This, from the moment when these possibilities came into the practical sphere, was the goal of Sir Douglas Haig. Marshal Foch independently from his higher standpoint held of course the same view; and it fell to him to concert the whole immense operation. He had however at General Pershing's desire lent himself reluctantly to an American advance upon Metz and into the Saar Valley, if the St. Mihiel attack succeeded. This was an irrelevant and divergent feature. If the British Army was to undertake the tremendous task of smashing through the Hindenburg Line and advancing upon Maubeuge, it was imperative that all other operations should aim at the vital point and contribute to the supreme result. Haig therefore at the end of August urged Foch to alter the American offensive from a divergent to a convergent direction, i.e. from east to north-west, and towards Mezières instead of towards Metz. Foch entirely agreed, and after further conferences with Pershing obtained his assent to the change of plan.

On September 3, Marshal Foch's 'Directive' prescribed that while (1) the British Armies supported by the left of the French Armies continue to attack in the general direction Cambrai-

St. Quentin, and (2) the centre of the French Armies continues its action to drive the enemy beyond the Aisne and the Ailette, (3) the American Army after delivering at the latest by September 10 their attack on the St. Mihiel salient should prepare 'as



strong and violent an offensive as possible in the general direction of Mezières, covered on the East by the Meuse and supported on the left by the attack of the Fourth French Army (Gouraud).'

In addition to this, by a Note of September 8, Foch prescribed a third offensive in Belgium in the general direction of Ghent.

A new army group was to be formed comprising the British Second Army (now again under Plumer), the Belgian Army and a French contingent, in all sixteen infantry and seven cavalry divisions. These forces were placed under the command of the King of the Belgians with the French General Dégouttes as Chief of the Staff. The attack was in principle a left-handed scoop pivoting on the British troops holding the Lys near Armentières.

Such was the gigantic triple offensive of the Allies: towards Mezières by the French and Americans; towards Maubeuge by the British; and towards Ghent by the Belgians and British with a French contingent. The time was fixed for the end of September. The interval was filled by the forward movement of the Allied armies towards the new main fronts of assault. This involved important preliminary battles. Of these the first and most famous was the attack by the First American Army on the St. Mihiel salient. On the morning of September 11, nine United States divisions (each equal in infantry numbers to two and a half French or British divisions) and three French divisions broke into the St. Mihiel salient. The German and Austrian defenders who had already been ordered to evacuate were caught in the early stages of that operation. The Americans attacking with the utmost ardour penetrated at the first shock of their Eastern attack nearly 6 miles upon a front of 11. On the 12th they joined hands across the salient with their western attack, and by the 14th when the operation was completed had captured 16,000 prisoners and 450 guns. On September 18 the Fourth and Third British armies attacked on a 17 mile front centring on Epéhy, with the object of bringing the main forces into striking distance of the Hindenburg Line. This preparatory battle was most severe. The British advanced about 3 miles and captured 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns, but with heavy loss. Meanwhile the French armies slanting back from the British right had on the night of the 8th surprised the crossings of the Crozat Canal, and by continual fighting emphasized and exploited the German retreat.

The map (pages 1392, 1393), which was given to me by Sir Douglas Haig, shows the position of all the troops on the Western Front on the eve of its largest battle. Colonel Boraston discharges a necessary task when he sets forth the respective forces on the three fronts of the assault. The facts which follow are based on his account, independently checked. For the southern battle there were assembled 31 French and 13 United States divisions, the latter equal in rifle strength to at least 30 French divisions; a total comparable mass of above 60 Ally divisions. To this the enemy opposed 1 Austrian and 19 German divisions of which 6

were first-class troops. For the northern battle the Allies had gathered 8 Belgian, 5 British and 3 French Infantry divisions, with 1 Belgian, 3 British and 3 French cavalry divisions. Against this army stood 12 German divisions, 4 of good quality. But in the central battle the Germans were actually superior in numbers to the British. No less than 57 German divisions, 18 of which were assault divisions, were concentrated in the battle area behind the far-famed defences of the Hindenburg Line. To storm these fortifications and to defeat the German masses upon its front, Sir Douglas Haig could marshal no more than 40 British divisions and the IIInd American Corps. Moreover, the interposition of the Canal du Nord and the Scheldt Canal deprived the British attack almost entirely of the aid of tanks.

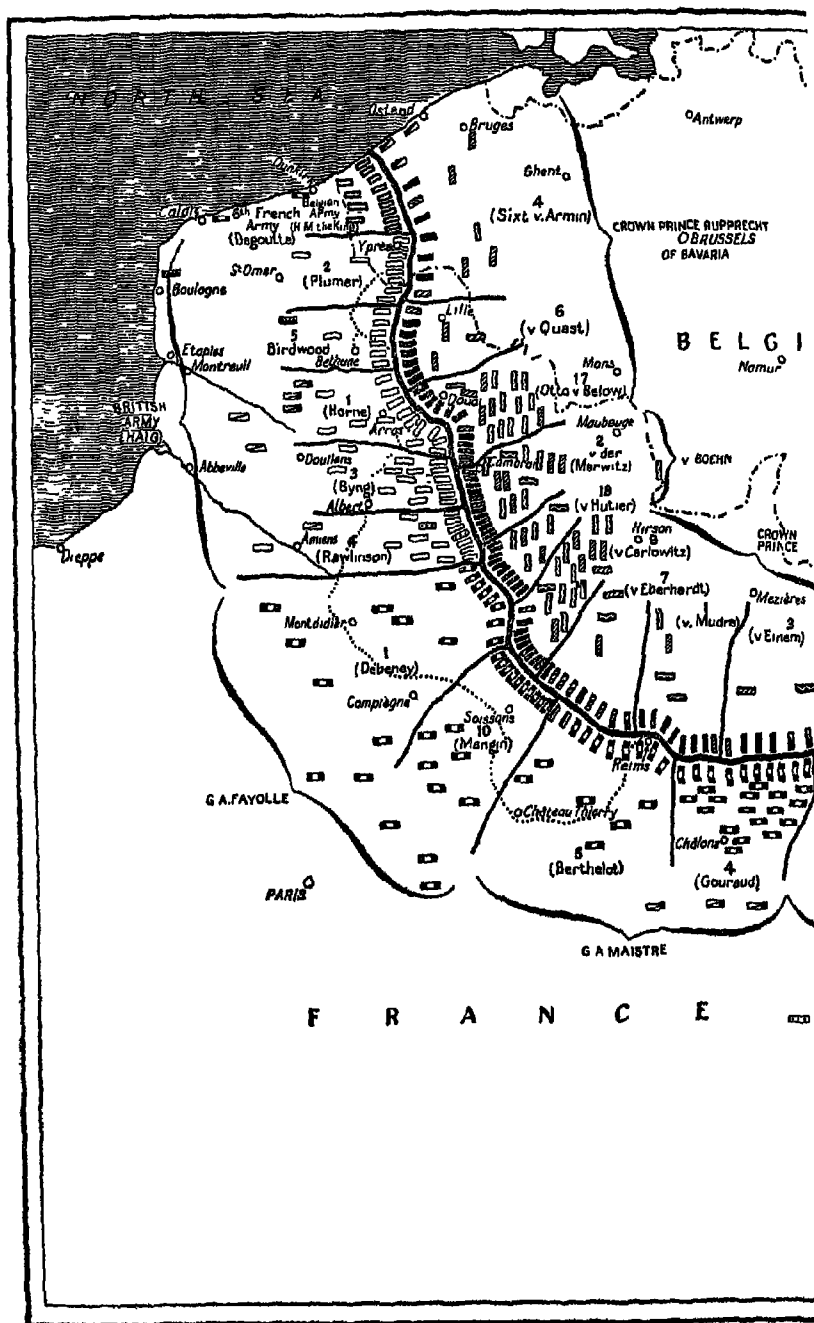
Each of these episodes would make a thrilling monograph, but these pages can only record in a few sentences the outstanding results.

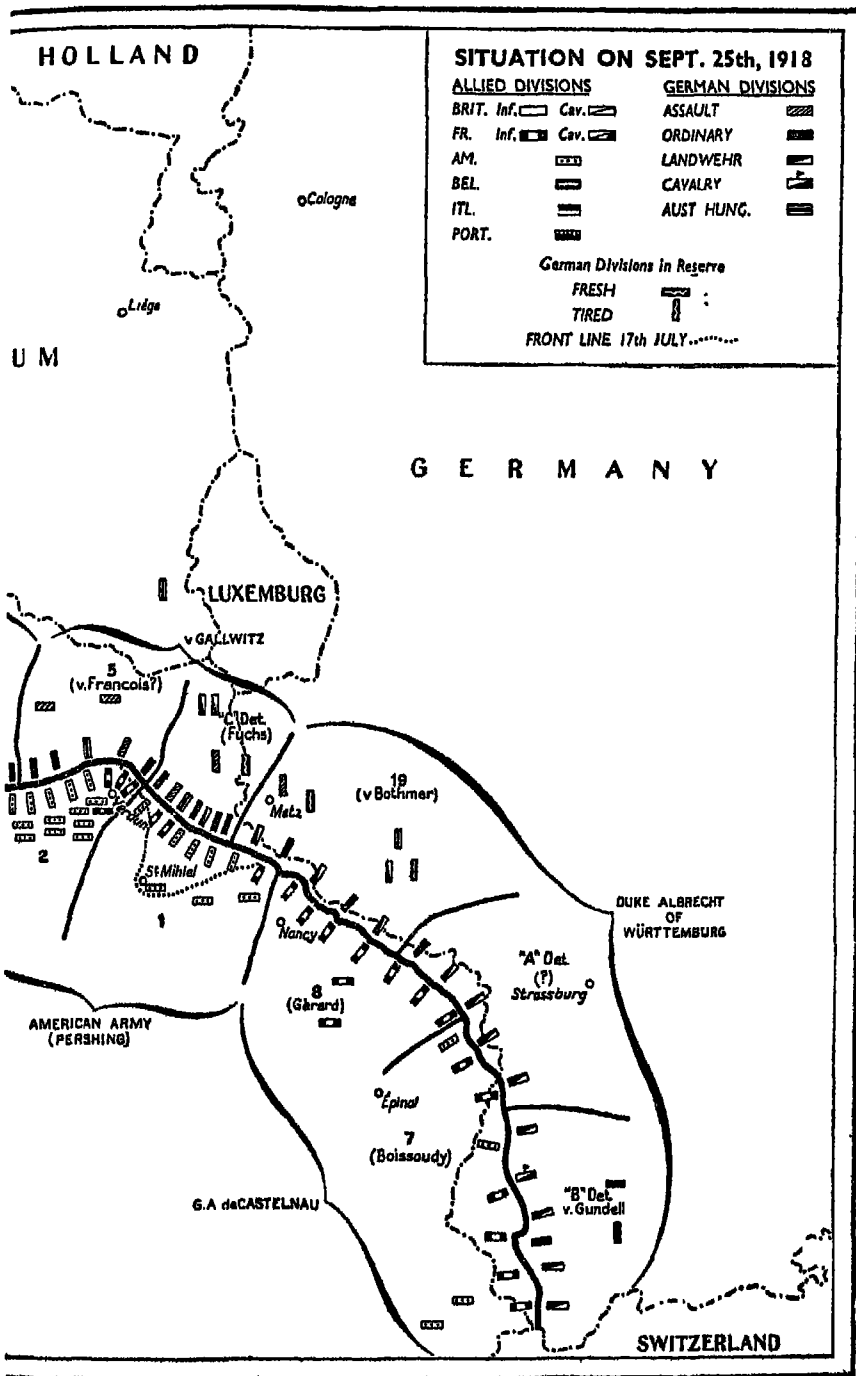
Pershing and Gouraud fell on shoulder to shoulder at daybreak on the 26th, the Americans engaging on a 20-, the French on a 24-mile front. The Americans, undaunted by severe losses, stormed the German first system of defences on almost the whole front of attack and penetrated at some points nearly  $6\frac{3}{4}$  miles. Gouraud's army also advanced from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles, but thereafter neither attack made much progress. The American supply arrangements broke down, the roads became hopelessly blocked for tens of miles with stationary vehicles. The nourishment of the American fighting line with food, ammunition and reinforcements was only achieved partially and with extreme difficulty. The German counter-attacks retrieved some of the lost ground, and in places cut off or destroyed the American units which had advanced the farthest. The ground was difficult in the extreme, and a weltering deadlock supervened for several weeks. During this time however the French and Americans captured 39,000 prisoners and 300 guns, and held the outnumbered German forces stoutly in their grip.

The northern battle was victorious. The Germans, over-matched, fell back before the assault, the British and Belgian divisions fought their way forward through the awful desolation of the Ypres-Passchendaele battlefield, and in three days stood on the Menin-Roulers road 10 miles from their starting-point, having captured with small losses nearly 11,000 prisoners and 300 guns. The French contingent was not at this stage engaged.

The centre battle had begun on the 27th, on which day the extraordinary obstacle of the Canal du Nord, with its cutting often 60 feet deep, was stormed by the right of the First Army (Horne) and the left of the Third (Byng). Upon a 13-mile front, a four-mile advance was achieved with a capture of 10,000

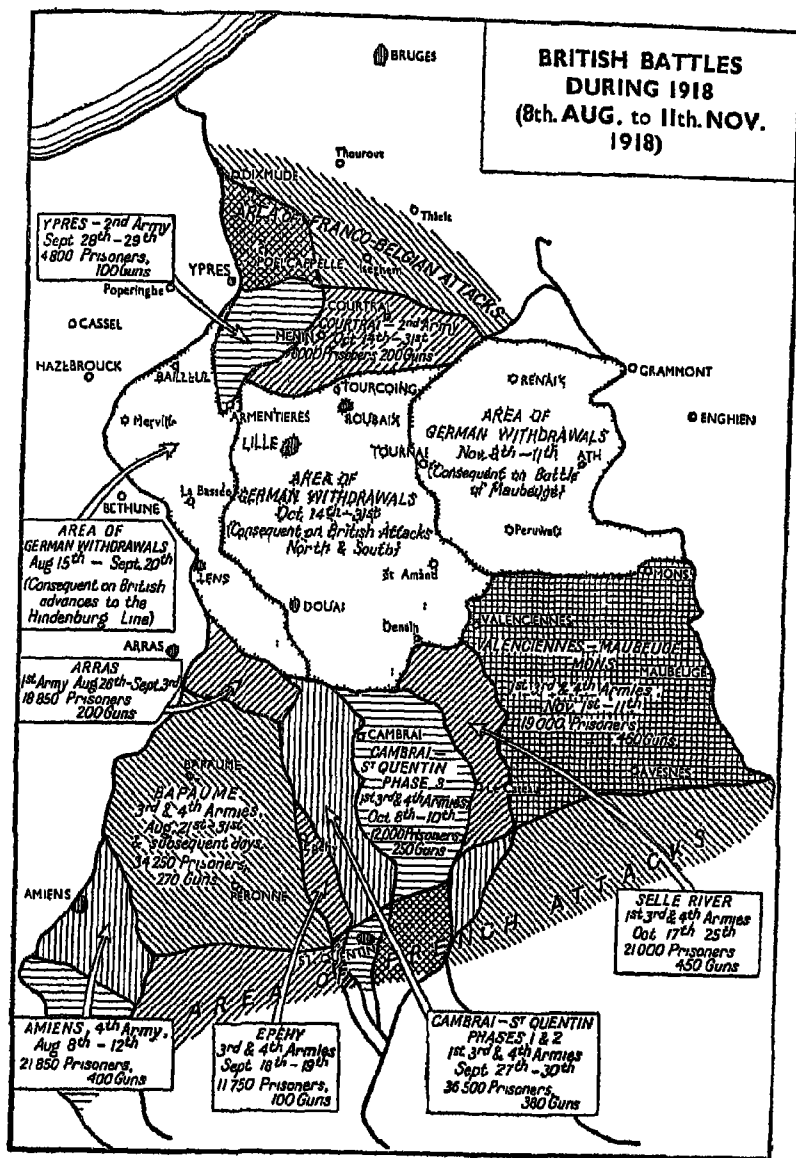






prisoners and 200 guns. This enabled the rest of the Third Army and the Fourth Army (Rawlinson) to come into action to the southward. Rawlinson's artillery in the absence of tanks in large numbers had on this occasion subjected the Hindenburg positions to 48 hours' intense bombardment in the old style. Nevertheless when his army attacked on the 29th it encountered a most severe resistance. The American Corps led the centre of the assault. They were supported and were to be leap-frogged by the Australians. A noble rivalry—carried by the Americans to an utter disregard of losses—prevailed between these proud soldiers, sprung from the same stock, speaking the same language, yet drawn from far distant quarters of the globe and by different paths of history. Several strong posts in advance of the German front had not as was intended been reduced on the previous day, and moreover both American divisions started 1,000 yards behind their barrage. Over a part of the attack their dead lay 'in orderly lines' mowed down by machine-gun fire. Elsewhere their extraordinary ardour carried them deep into the German defences. The great tunnel through which the canal passed and the deep dugouts of the long prepared fortifications disgorged strong German forces who took the ambitious assailants in rear, and cut off and slew large numbers. But all fought desperately without thought of retirement. The war-experienced Australians advanced in succour, and after further close and bloody fighting all the ground was gripped and held.

This tragic glorious episode was only a part of the Fourth Army's battle, and all three British armies were fully and continuously engaged. By the night of the 30th the Hindenburg Line on a front of 25 miles was blasted and pierced to an average depth of seven miles, and 36,500 prisoners and 380 guns were reported to Sir Douglas Haig. The total British casualties in France from the beginning of September to October 9 were over 200,000, of which 6,500 officers and 133,700 men fell in the series of battles for the Hindenburg Line, otherwise called Cambrai-St. Quentin. To these must be added 6,000 Americans, or a fifth of the infantry of the United States II<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps. The battle and advance were continued from the 8th to the 10th October, 20 kilometres being gained by the latter date on the whole Cambrai-St. Quentin front and 12,000 more prisoners and 230 guns being captured. Under the impulsion of this tremendous central thrust and of the northern and southern battles, the Germans withdrew their forces in all the intervening sectors of the front. They were followed in the closest contact by all the opposing Allied troops.



**CAPTURES BY BRITISH AND ALLIED ARMIES  
FROM JULY 18th TO NOVEMBER 11th, 1918**

	PRISONERS	GUNS
BRITISH ARMIES	188 700	2 840
FRENCH ARMIES	139 000	1 880
AMERICAN ARMIES	48 800	1 424
BELGIAN ARMIES	14 500	474

Yet it was only indirectly from the tremendous collisions in the West that the final blow to German resisting power came. The theatre where the war had languished in a costly and futile fashion since the summer of 1915, the theatre in which exertions were universally condemned by all the highest military authorities of the Allies, was destined to produce the culminating decision. The strength of a chain, however ponderous, is that of its weakest link. The Bulgarian link was about to snap, and with it the remaining cohesion of the whole hostile coalition. This event was not however induced by local circumstances. It resulted from the consternation which followed the defeat of the German armies in France. On September 15, agreeably with the general forward movement of the Allies on all the fronts, the so-called Salonica Army developed an offensive against Bulgaria, having for its central objective the important town and railway junction of Uskub. It was indeed a heterogeneous army that advanced under the orders of Franchet d'Esperey, the ultimate successor of Sarrail. Eight French, seven British, six Greek (Venizelist), six Serbian, and four Italian Divisions—all under strength, wasted with fever, and modestly equipped with artillery, set themselves in motion against the mountainous frontiers of Bulgaria. Seventeen Bulgarian and two Turkish divisions, gripped and guided by a few German battalions and batteries and the prestige of Mackensen, constituted a force ample for a successful defence of such difficult country. But the Bulgarians would fight no more. Bulgaria quitted the field as sullenly, as callously, and as decidedly as she had entered it. The accession of the tepid Malinoff Ministry to power in the last week of June had caused anxiety in Berlin, and had afforded to the diplomacy of the Allies a fertile opportunity. In particular the influence of the United States, who had never declared war against Bulgaria and whose representative was still in Sofia, was exerted with potent skill.

After weak resistance, which nevertheless revealed the advantages of the defenders, the Bulgarian soldiers retreated, ceased to fight, and declared their intention of going to their homes to gather the harvest. These sturdy peasants were deaf to German expostulations. They were quite friendly to the small German forces which steadily advanced to sustain the front. The retreating battalions even spared the time to help the German cannon out of the ruts. But turn, or stand, or fight—all that was over for ever!

On the night of September 26, a Bulgarian Staff Officer carried a flag of truce to General Milne's Headquarters, and in the name of his Commander-in-Chief sought a 48-hours' suspension of hostilities, to be followed by a peace delegation. On the 28th, Bulgaria agreed unconditionally to demobilize her army, to restore

all conquered territory, to surrender all means of transport, to cease to be a belligerent, and to place her railways and her territory at the disposal of the Allies for their further operations.

I was in Paris with Loucheur when the news arrived, and it was recognized at once that the end had come. On September 29 a Conference convened at Spa on Ludendorff's initiative decided to approach President Wilson, whose 'high ideals' fostered hope, with proposals on behalf of Germany for an armistice. On October 1 Hindenburg under the pressure of the Triple battle, demanded that the request for an armistice should be made by the next morning. On October 4 King Ferdinand abdicated the Bulgarian crown and fled to Vienna. This extraordinary figure, who combined the extremes of craft, fierceness, resolution, and miscalculation, now vanished from view. It had been twice in his power to achieve a large part of those overweening ambitions of his country which he so ardently championed. Alike after the first Balkan war (against Turkey) in 1912, or before Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in 1915, he could, by taking a different and easier course, have raised his country to the headship of a Balkan confederation: but the erroneous valuations on which the power and logic of his mind based itself in complete exclusion of moral factors, forced him at immense personal risk and toil to thrust his country twice over into utter disaster.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those who choose the moment for beginning wars do not always fix the moment for ending them. To ask for an armistice is one thing, to obtain it is another. The new Chancellor—Prince Max of Baden—sent his Note to President Wilson on the 5th. He based himself on the 'Fourteen Points,' which in the name of Germany he accepted. The President replied on the 8th, asking questions and demanding a German withdrawal from invaded territory as a guarantee of good faith. On the 12th Germany and Austria declared themselves willing to evacuate all invaded territory as a preliminary to an armistice. On the 14th the President indicated that there could be no negotiation with the Emperor. As for an armistice, the conditions must be left to the Commanders in the field, but absolute safeguards must be provided for the maintenance of 'the present military supremacy of the armies of the United States and of the Allies in the field.' During this correspondence, which Mr. Wilson was peculiarly fitted to conduct, and which promised to be lengthy, the Allied armies rolled forward, all along the line in France, maintaining a ceaseless battle at an ever more powerful crescendo of attack. The vital German lateral railway still worked in front of the Ardennes. Pershing and Gouraud were steadily approaching it in the south

and Haig's heavy artillery already held Aulnoye Junction under continual fire. On the northern flank King Albert's army advanced upon Courtrai. The German troops in the wide intervals between these main thrusts fell back continually in conformity with battle results. Ludendorff's reserves were exhausted. A large proportion of his Divisions could not be relied upon to fight with determination; all were reduced to a third or a fifth of their fighting strength. The Siegfried Line collapsed at many points. Feverish exertions were made to fortify the Antwerp-Meuse positions, and Ludendorff with true instinct but tardy decision began to survey a line along the German frontier. Desperate agitated councils were held between the military leaders and the new political figures who had appeared. On the 20th the German Government renounced the submarine campaign. Meanwhile in Italy the whole of the Italian Army with their Allies—Lord Cavan's British Army in the van—hurled themselves across the Piave upon the forces of the liquefying Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in the last week of October completely shattered their military value. The Vatican stretched out an appealing hand. On November 4 an armistice which deprived the Empire of the Hapsburgs of every means of resistance, and placed her territories at the disposal of the Allies for further operations, brought hostilities in this theatre to an end.

The British armies had now passed the Selle River, taking in the process 21,000 prisoners and 450 guns, and were marching swiftly forward on Valenciennes, Mons and Maubeuge, driving the enemy before them. The ardour of the troops knew no bounds. The conviction that the terrible enemy they had fought so long was breaking up under their hammer blows, and the rapture and joy of the liberated populations, made them more ready to sacrifice their lives in these last days than even in the darkest periods of the war. Every soldier felt himself at once a Conquerer and a Deliverer. The same impulses inflamed the Americans. As for the French, who shall describe the emotions with which haggard and torn, but regardless of a loss which in these last months (July to November) exceeded half a million men, they day by day battered down their ancient foe, and redeemed the sacred soil of France?

The armistice for which Hindenburg and Ludendorff had argued wore by now the aspect of an unconditional surrender. Ludendorff thereupon wished to fight on, declaring with truth that nothing could worsen the terms which Germany would receive. On the 27th the German Government, being resolved on total submission, moved the Emperor to dismiss him from his post. Hindenburg remained 'greatly falling with a falling

State.' To him and to the German machine gunners belong the honours of the final agony.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the great organizations of this world are strained beyond breaking-point, their structure often collapses at all points simultaneously. There is nothing on which policy, however wise, can build; no foothold can be found for virtue or valour, no authority or impetus for a rescuing genius. The mighty framework of German Imperial Power, which a few days before had overshadowed the nations, shattered suddenly into a thousand individually disintegrating fragments. All her Allies, whom she had so long sustained, fell down broken and ruined, begging separately for peace. The faithful armies were beaten at the front and demoralized from the rear. The proud, efficient Navy mutinied. Revolution exploded in the most disciplined and docile of States. The Supreme War Lord fled.

Such a spectacle appals mankind; and a knell rang in the ear of the victors, even in their hour of triumph.

\* \* \* \* \*

Parliament was disposed to be suspicious of the Armistice terms until they heard them. But when the document was read overwhelming thankfulness filled all hearts. No one could think of any further stipulation. Immediate evacuation of invaded countries; repatriation of all inhabitants; surrender in good condition of 5,000 guns, 30,000 machine-guns, 3,000 minenwerfers, 2,000 aeroplanes; evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine; surrender of three bridge-heads on the Rhine; surrender of 5,000 locomotives, 150,000 waggons, 5,000 motor lorries in good working order (and with spare parts); disclosure of all mines, of delay-action fuses, and assistance in their discovery and destruction; immediate repatriation without reciprocity of all prisoners of war; abandonment of the Treaties of Bucharest and Brest-Litovsk; surrender of 6 battle-cruisers, the best 10 battleships, 8 light cruisers, 50 of the best destroyers; surrender of all submarines; the right of the Allies on failure of execution of any condition to denounce the Armistice within 48 hours. Such were the covenanted clauses. And thus did Germany hand herself over powerless and defenceless to the discretion of her long tortured and now victorious foes!

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a few minutes before the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. I stood at the window of my room, looking up Northumberland Avenue towards Trafalgar Square,



waiting for Big Ben to tell that the War was over. My mind strayed back across the scarring years to the scene and emotions of the night at the Admiralty when I listened for these same chimes in order to give the signal of war against Germany to our Fleets and squadrons across the world. And now all was over! The unarmed and untrained island nation, who with no defence but its Navy had faced unquestioningly the strongest manifestation of military power in human record, had completed its task. Our country had emerged from the ordeal alive and safe, its vast possessions intact, its war effort still waxing, its institutions unshaken, its people and Empire united as never before. Victory had come after all the hazards and heartbreaks in an absolute and unlimited form. All the Kings and Emperors with whom we had warred were in flight or exile. All their Armies and Fleets were destroyed or subdued. In this Britain had borne a notable part, and done her best from first to last.

The minutes passed. I was conscious of reaction rather than elation. The material purposes on which one's work had been centred, every process of thought on which one had lived, crumbled into nothing. The whole vast business of supply, the growing outputs, the careful hoards, the secret future plans—but yesterday the whole duty of life—all at a stroke vanished like a nightmare dream, leaving a void behind. My mind mechanically persisted in exploring the problems of demobilization. What was to happen to our three million Munition workers? What would they make now? How would the roaring factories be converted? How in fact are swords beaten into ploughshares? How long would it take to bring the Armies home? What would they do when they got home? We had of course a demobilization plan for the Ministry of Munitions. It had been carefully worked out, but it had played no part in our thoughts. Now it must be put into operation. The levers must be pulled—*Full Steam Astern*. The Munitions Council must meet without delay.

And then suddenly the first stroke of the chime. I looked again at the broad street beneath me. It was deserted. From the portals of one of the large hotels absorbed by Government Departments darted the slight figure of a girl clerk, distractedly gesticulating while another stroke resounded. Then from all sides men and women came scurrying into the street. Streams of people poured out of all the buildings. The bells of London began to clash. Northumberland Avenue was now crowded with people in hundreds, nay, thousands, rushing hither and thither in a frantic manner, shouting and screaming with joy. I could see that Trafalgar Square was already swarming. Around me in our very headquarters, in the Hotel Metropole, disorder had broken out. Doors banged. Feet clattered down corridors. Everyone

rose from the desk and cast aside pen and paper. All bounds were broken. The tumult grew. It grew like a gale, but from all sides simultaneously. The street was now a seething mass of humanity. Flags appeared as if by magic. Streams of men and women flowed from the Embankment. They mingled with torrents pouring down the Strand on their way to acclaim the King. Almost before the last stroke of the clock had died away, the strict, war-straitened, regulated streets of London had become a triumphant pandemonium. At any rate it was clear that no more work would be done that day. Yes, the chains which had held the world were broken. Links of imperative need, links of discipline, links of brute force, links of self-sacrifice, links of terror, links of honour which had held our nation, nay, the greater part of mankind, to grinding toil, to a compulsive cause—every one had snapped upon a few strokes of the clock. Safety, freedom, peace, home, the dear one back at the fireside—all after fifty-two months of gaunt distortion. After fifty-two months of making burdens grievous to be borne and binding them on men's backs, at last, all at once, suddenly and everywhere the burdens were cast down. At least so for the moment it seemed.

My wife arrived, and we decided to go and offer our congratulations to the Prime Minister, on whom the central impact of the home struggle had fallen, in his hour of recompense. But no sooner had we entered our car than twenty people mounted upon it, and in the midst of a wildly cheering multitude we were impelled slowly forward through Whitehall. We had driven together the opposite way along the same road on the afternoon of the ultimatum. There had been the same crowd and almost the same enthusiasm. It was with feelings which do not lend themselves to words that I heard the cheers of the brave people who had borne so much and given all, who had never wavered, who had never lost faith in their country or its destiny, and who could be indulgent to the faults of their servants when the hour of deliverance had come.

\* \* \* \* \*

It will certainly not fall to this generation to pronounce the final verdict upon the Great War. The German people are worthy of better explanations than the shallow tale that they were undermined by enemy propaganda. If the propaganda was effective, it was because it awoke an echo in German hearts, and stirred misgivings which from the beginning had dwelt there. Thus when four years of blockade and battle against superior numbers and resources had sapped the vitality of the German people, the rebellious whispers of conscience became the proclaimed opinion of millions.

Yet in the sphere of force, human records contain no manifesta-

tion like the eruption of the German volcano. For four years Germany fought and defied the five continents of the world by land and sea and air. The German Armies upheld her tottering confederates, intervened in every theatre with success, stood everywhere on conquered territory, and inflicted on their enemies more than twice the bloodshed they suffered themselves. To break their strength and science and curb their fury, it was necessary to bring all the greatest nations of mankind into the field against them. Overwhelming populations, unlimited resources, measureless sacrifice, the Sea Blockade, could not prevail for fifty months. Small states were trampled down in the struggle; a mighty Empire was battered into unrecognizable fragments; and nearly twenty million men perished or shed their blood before the sword was wrested from that terrible hand. Surely, Germans, for history it is enough!

\* \* \* \* \*

The curtain falls upon the long front in France and Flanders. The soothing hands of Time and Nature, the swift repair of peaceful industry, have already almost effaced the crater fields and the battle lines which in a broad belt from the Vosges to the sea lately blackened the smiling fields of France. The ruins are rebuilt, the riven trees are replaced by new plantations. Only the cemeteries, the monuments and stunted steeples, with here and there a mouldering trench or huge mine-crater lake, assail the traveller with the fact that twenty-five millions of soldiers fought here and twelve millions shed their blood or perished in the greatest of all human contentions some twenty years ago. Merciful oblivion draws its veils; the crippled limp away; the mourners fall back into the sad twilight of memory. New youth is here to claim its rights, and the perennial stream flows forward even in the battle zone, as if the tale were all a dream.

Is this the end? Is it to be merely a chapter in a cruel and senseless story? Will a new generation in their turn be immolated to square the black accounts of Teuton and Gaul? Will our children bleed and gasp again in devastated lands? Or will there spring from the very fires of conflict that reconciliation of the three giant combatants, which would unite their genius and secure to each in safety and freedom a share in rebuilding the glory of Europe?

## APPENDIXES

- G. THE STATE OF THE NAVY, MAY, 1915.
- H. FIRST LORD'S MINUTES.
- I. LORD FISHER'S RESIGNATION.
- J. BRITISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN CASUALTY RETURNS.
- K. ALLY AND GERMAN BATTLESHIP STRENGTH, 1917.
- L. MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS COUNCIL, 1917-18.
- M. MUNITION MINUTES, 1917.
- N. MECHANICAL POWER IN THE OFFENSIVE.
- O. TANK MINUTES.



# APPENDIX G

## MEMORANDUM BY MR. CHURCHILL, CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER, ON THE STATE OF THE NAVY, MAY, 1915

On the declaration of war the relative strength in Home Waters of the British Grand Fleet and the German High Sea Fleet was as follows:—

	British.	German.
Dreadnought battleships . . . . .	20	13
Dreadnought battle-cruisers . . . . .	4	3 and <i>Blücher</i> .
Armoured cruisers . . . . .	8	6 (older).
Modern light cruisers . . . . .	10	15

In addition there were the 8 *King Edwards* and 5 *Duncans* (two in dockyard hands), which gave a good predominance over the 10 *Deutschlands*; and there were on each side the older ships (ours incomparably the stronger), for which it was very difficult to find a use in the North Sea.

Included among our older ships forming the Channel Fleet were the 2 *Lord Nelsons* (because of their low speed) and 6 *Formidables*.

Looking at the relative strength of the vital units on each side, there was not much margin for mistakes or accidents. But the Fleet was, in its war station, fully concentrated with its flotillas and out of the reach of all surprise. The British ships are individually the more powerful; and with exact knowledge of the balance of force the Germans did not offer battle.

It was in this situation that the Admiralty took the responsibility for advising that none of the six regular divisions need be kept at home. The appreciations of both the British and German Admiralties on the relative strength of the Fleets at this critical moment seem to have been in agreement. All other opportunities will be less favourable to the enemy.

Since then all German ships abroad have been destroyed, and, in consequence, it has been possible greatly to reduce our foreign service squadrons. New construction has also progressed, and ships building at home for foreign countries have been purchased and completed. From these causes the British Grand Fleet has been reinforced by the following ships:—

### Battleships.

*Erin, Agincourt, Benbow, Emperor of India, Warspite, Queen Elizabeth.*

### Battle Cruisers.

*Tiger, Indomitable, Indefatigable, Invincible, Australia.*

### Armoured Cruisers.

*Defence, Warrior, Black Prince, Duke of Edinburgh, Minotaur, Hampshire, Donegal, Lancaster, Essex.*

### Modern Light Cruisers.

*Calliope, Royalist, Phaeton, Comus, Galatea, Caroline, Cordelia, Inconstant, Penelope, Undaunted, Arethusa, Aurora, Gloucester, Yarmouth.*

### Flotilla Leaders.

*Botha, Broke, Faulknor.*

and 27 Destroyers.

Against this we have lost *Audacious*. Three pre-Dreadnought battleships of the Duncan class, which had already for some months been detached from the Grand

Fleet, have been sent to the Mediterranean, and the complements of 8 old *Edgar* cruisers, which used to form the 10th Cruiser Squadron, have turned over to 24 armed merchant cruisers and 8 armed boarding steamers.

The Harwich Striking Force has been strengthened since the beginning of the war by the light cruisers *Arethusa*, *Penelope*, *Undaunted*, and *Aurora* (mentioned above); against which we have lost *Amphion*. The flotilla leader *Tipperary* joins shortly. The number of destroyers in this force is 33, as against 36 on the outbreak of war, comprising the 'L' and 'M' flotillas, which are the latest, fastest, and most powerful vessels. In spite of losses, there are now 18 oversea submarines based on Harwich, as against 17 on the outbreak of war. In all we have at home 63 submarines.

Meanwhile the Germans have received:—

Battleships.

*Markgraf*, *König*, and *Grösser Kurfürst*, and probably *Kron Prinz*.

Battle Cruisers.

*Derfflinger*, *Lützow* (probably in June; but better assume her ready now).

Light Cruisers.

*Graudenz*, *Pillau*, and *Regensburg*. Second *ex-Russian* (?) *Zoppot* shortly.

Probably between 10 and 20 destroyers and 8 to 10 oversea submarines (apart from an uncertain number of smaller submarines).

Against this they have lost in Home Waters (apart from losses abroad):—

Armoured Cruiser.

*Blücher* (almost a battle cruiser).

Modern Light Cruisers.

*Magdeburg*, *Köln*, and *Mainz*.

Nine or 10 destroyers and probably the same number of oversea submarines, besides older ships like the *Yorch*, *Friedrich Carl* and *Ariadne*.

Thus, taking the Grand Fleet and the Harwich Striking Force together, our strength today is:—

Dreadnought battleships	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	25 to 17
Battle cruisers (including <i>Lützow</i> )	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9 to 5
Total Dreadnoughts	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	34 to 22

Pre-Dreadnoughts included in the Grand and High Sea Fleets—

<i>King Edwards</i>	.	.	.	.	.	8	to 10	{ <i>Deutsch-</i> <i>lands.</i>
<i>Duncans</i>	.	.	.	.	.	2		
Armoured Cruisers (all obsolescent)	.	.	.	.	.	17 to 4		
Modern Light Cruisers, including those attached to Squadrons and Flotillas	.	.	.	.	.	26	to	{ German possible total of 16 modern light cruisers.
Flotilla Leaders	.	.	.	.	.	4		
Destroyers	.	.	.	.	.	5	flotillas comprising 93 boats and 3 additional; total, 96	
Against, probably	.	.	.	.	.	8	flotillas comprising 88 boats.	
„ possibly	.	.	.	.	.	10	„ „ 110 „	

The British total does not include 15 older destroyers attached to the Grand Fleet for subsidiary purposes, nor 25 destroyers, including 11 *Tribals*, forming the Dover Patrol, nor, of course, the Patrol Flotillas (23 destroyers), nor the Harbour Defence Flotillas (45 destroyers and 80 torpedo-boats).

The foregoing figures do not, however, give any true idea of the strength of the British Fleet, which includes 2 ships armed with 15-inch guns and 17 ships armed with 13.5 inch guns, so that the weight of metal, ship for ship and squadron for squadron in the line, apart from numbers, shows an enormous preponderance. The armoured cruisers include 9 *Minotaur*s and *Natal*s, which are fast and powerful ships, and are contemporaries of the *King Edwards*. All our modern light cruisers are armed with 6-inch guns; none of the Germans, except the *Pillau* (*ex-Russian*), carry anything heavier than the 4-inch. The weight of metal of our destroyers is certainly three times that of the German destroyers.

On the other hand, the Germans have still in Home Waters two squadrons of very old battleships of the *Wittelsbach*, *Kaiser*, and earlier classes. We have only

3 such ships left here, the rest being in the Mediterranean. It is not easy to see what use could be made of these old German ships in a Fleet action. It is improbable that they would be brought to sea. If so, they would be the greatest impediment to the manœuvring power of the German Fleet, and the German Admiral would either have to leave them behind to be destroyed at leisure, or, by reducing his speed, allow the British Fleet to cross his T or otherwise engage him at a disadvantage.

Secondly, the argument of the decisive *versus* the average moment must not be overlooked. All the effective German forces must be considered available for the decisive battle, whereas our refits are continuous, and from this cause 2 or 3 Dreadnoughts and a similar proportion of cruisers and destroyers, are always absent. A further large deduction in the destroyers of the Harwich force occurs from time to time through the need to provide escorts for military purposes.

It will be seen that in all respects, actually and relatively, our position in Home Waters is better than it was at the outbreak of war, when we had full confidence in our strength and the enemy were under no delusions about it. During the next four months the repairs to *Inflexible* will be finished, and the super-Dreadnoughts *Canada*, *Barham*, *Valiant*, and *Malaya* will take their places in the line. No other German capital ship will be available in that period.

In view of these facts I believe the new Board will be able to assure my colleagues that there is no reason for anxiety about our superiority in the decisive theatre at the present time, and that the position will progressively improve.

I propose now to examine the great volume of new construction which is approaching completion. Before the end of the present year we shall receive:—

Battleships of the greatest power	7
Light cruisers	12
Destroyers of the largest class and leaders	65
Oversea submarines	40
Coastal submarines	22
Monitors—	
Heavy	18
Medium	14
Light	5
Sloops and smaller anti-submarine vessels	107

Of these we shall receive in the next three months:—

Battleships	3
Light cruisers	6
Destroyers and leaders	19
Submarines	20

And all the monitors, except the four just ordered, together with a variety of miscellaneous vessels.

The most striking features are:—

First, the very large construction of destroyers, sloops, and fast small craft adapted to the purpose of submarine hunting. Of these, not less than 172 will be ready by December 31.

Secondly, the very great construction of submarines. Of the 10 submarines built by the Bethlehem Steel Works in Canada, 4 will actually be completed early in June, having been ordered in November. We have never had a submarine built under 2 years before.

Thirdly, the Monitor fleet.

On the declaration of war I gave directions to take over the 3 small monitors building for Brazil, although at the time no one could see what use could be made of them. The operations on the Belgian coast in support of the left flank of the army immediately showed their value. Early in November, Mr. Schwab, of the Bethlehem Steel Works, came over here in connection with the big submarine orders we were seeking to place. In conversation he mentioned to Lord Fisher and me that he had almost ready the four 14-inch gun turrets which had been ordered for the Greek battleship *Salamis* now building in Germany. I suggested to Lord Fisher that we should buy these turrets and build monitors to carry them. He took the idea up with avidity, and thereafter we embarked in the closest agreement upon a very large policy of monitor building. We took two spare 15-inch gun turrets which had been prepared for two of the furthest off new battleships (now converted into battle cruisers), and eight 12-inch gun turrets out of 4 *Majestics*,



which we laid up, and with these and the American guns we armed the 14 heavy monitors, namely, 2 with two 15-inch guns, 4 with two 14-inch guns, and 8 with two 12-inch guns apiece. Lord Fisher then went on and pulled the 9.2 inch guns out of the old *Edgars* and mounted them in 14 small monitors, drawing 6 feet of water, and ten 6-inch guns, two of which had to be removed from each of the 5 *Queen Elizabeths*, owing to spray interference, were mounted in still smaller ones drawing only 4 feet. We also built 12 monitors for service on the Danube, when the Straits are forced. These are more powerful than the Austrian vessels there, and are capable of being transported by rail, and we are also building 12 monitors or river gun-boats for service on the Tigris and Euphrates. The whole of this new construction is now coming to hand. At the same time we ordered steel protected flat-bottomed boats, specially designed to hold a company each and the whole capable of landing 50,000 men simultaneously at any point which may be found subsequently convenient.

The big monitors should have a part to play in the immediate future. They were originally devised for action among the shallows in the Heligoland Bight. They are heavily armoured. They draw only 10 feet of water and can therefore proceed into water so shallow that no submarine can follow them. They are also protected against torpedoes and mines by large bulges which extend more than 15 feet away from the ship and are composed of numerous compartments, some filled with air and some with water, with a space open to the sea between the outer compartments and the ship. All the guns have been given a special elevation which enables them to fire at ranges exceeding 20,000 yards. The speed of the monitors is their weak point, slightly less than 7 knots being realized with the first one completed at Belfast. Nine heavy monitors will be completed before the end of June, and the rest by about the end of July. The bulk of this work has been done by Harland and Wolff, and the construction of these very heavy vessels carrying the largest guns in the world in 5 or 6 months is one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of British shipbuilding. The workmen have done nobly, both by their exertions and discretion. These monitors should be able to play an important part in default of all other means in the final phases of the Dardanelles operations.

There is no reason to believe that the Germans at all appreciate the extent of our preparations in this respect.

I have not dealt with the new construction maturing after December 31. It is, however, considerable.

The yards are now absolutely full with new construction, and the policy had been approved by the late Board of keeping them running at full blast by placing new orders, in addition to the above, as soon as any opening appeared.

#### MANNING.

The active personnel of the Fleet, which before the war was 140,000, is today 251,000. The arrangements for manning the new construction have been completed for more than three months ahead, the following ships being provided for in all respects:—

Now—

*Canada* (battleship).

*Cleopatra*

*Conquest*

*Carysfort*

*Kempfenfelt*

*Tipperary*

*Lightfoot*

} (light cruisers)

} (flotilla leaders).

4 12-inch monitors.

2 9.2-inch monitors.

9 sloops.

*Marmion*

*Martial*

} ('M' class destroyers).

4 small China River gun-boats.

2 large submarines.

21 small submarines

200 lighters.

9 flat-bottomed boats.

} (up to July 31).

*June, 1915—*

2 15-inch monitors.  
 8 12-inch monitors.  
 8 9.2-inch monitors.  
 5 6-inch monitors.  
*Moon* ('M' class destroyer).  
*Medea* }  
*Melampus* } (late Greek destroyers).  
 7 sloops.  
 50 torpedo launches

*July, 1915—*

4 9.2-inch monitors.  
*Mandate* }  
*Michael* } ('M' class destroyers).  
*Medusa* }  
*Melpomene* } (late Greek destroyers).  
 8 sloops.  
 4 large China River gun-boats.  
 4 small China River gun-boats.  
 15 whalers.

*August, 1915—*

*Barham* (battleship).  
*Malaya* (battleship).  
*Birkenhead* (late Greek light cruiser).  
*Champion* (light cruiser).  
*Marksman* (flotilla leader).  
*Nimrod* (flotilla leader).  
*Marigold* }  
*Milbrook* }  
*Nons* }  
*Myrtle* } ('M' class destroyers).  
*Morning Star* }  
*Nessus* }  
*Manners* }  
 4 large China River gun-boats.  
 4 small China River gun-boats.  
*Titania* (submarine depot ship).  
 1 large submarine.

All the schools and training establishments have been kept in full activity from the beginning of the war, and a regular system of withdrawing men in rotation from the Grand Fleet and other fleets and squadrons, and replacing them by boys and young seamen, has enabled good and seasoned complements to be provided for the new vessels. It would, of course, be impossible to man all these new and powerful units without paying off and laying up a number of the oldest ships. We have already, as has been seen, voluntarily laid up 4 of the *Majestics*, and a certain number of the older armoured cruisers, and before the end of the autumn it will be necessary to lay up 8 or 10 of the *Majestic* and *Canopus* battleships and the 2 remaining *Cressys*, together with 4 or 5 other vessels of similar age and obsolescence. From this point of view, the reduction of our naval strength by the loss of old vessels, provided the crews are saved, can easily be over-estimated. But for the war, they would have been out of commission already; and now they will have to pass out of the service, in any case, to meet the superior claims of vastly stronger and more useful types. This point, together with the approach of the Monitor Fleet, was an important factor in the decision to undertake operations of the nature now proceeding at the Dardanelles. Recruiting is good and active, and Vote A, which now stands at 250,000 (including about 25,000 men of the Royal Naval Division and ancillary services), will shortly have to be increased, probably to 300,000. At the present time, when, owing to the prolongation of the operations at the Dardanelles, we are holding on to almost all our old ships and at the same time receiving constant accession of new ships, the strain

is at its greatest. But the needs of the next three months, both in officers and men, can be met, and thereafter considerable relief may be expected, both from the laying up of old ships and the completion of the training of large drafts.

#### *Defence of Harbours.*

Within the United Kingdom the principal harbours of strategic importance, and all naval bases, are now protected by anti-submarine booms. The effectiveness of these booms is shown by the fact that, so far as is known, no hostile submarine has penetrated or attempted to penetrate harbours and naval bases so defended. The anti-submarine booms constructed and placed in position as defences in the United Kingdom have a total length of 49.3 sea miles. In addition, there are 2 miles at Mudros Bay, Lemnos; and Gibraltar and Malta are also completed.

The system employed in many areas of submarine indicator nets, with trawlers and drifters watching them, has proved an effective deterrent to the passage of submarines, and there is reason to believe that the Germans prefer to make the enormous detour northabout rather than run the risk of passing the Dover cordon. The immunity which our transports and shipping have lately enjoyed in the Channel is largely due to the success of this system. 1,000 miles of indicator net have been ordered, of which about 700 miles have been delivered, and 75 miles have been sent to the Dardanelles, and more is to go.

#### *Auxiliary Vessels.*

A full numerical list of all vessels under the control of the Admiralty on April 19, reaching the total of 3,927, is attached. The numbers have increased since the list was completed.

##### *List of Vessels under Admiralty Control on April 19, 1915.*

Battleships . . . . .	62
Battle cruisers . . . . .	9
Cruisers . . . . .	43
Light cruisers . . . . .	64
Flotilla leaders . . . . .	4
Torpedo-boat destroyers . . . . .	226
Torpedo-boats . . . . .	106
Submarines . . . . .	71
Miscellaneous (sloops, gunboats, depot ships, etc.) . . . . .	72
Armed merchant cruisers . . . . .	44
Yachts . . . . .	71
Admiralty trawlers . . . . .	13
Auxiliary trawlers (late fleet sweepers) . . . . .	8
Fleet messengers . . . . .	18
Mine-sweeping trawlers, auxiliary patrol trawlers, drifters, etc. . . . .	1,359
Paddle mine-sweepers . . . . .	12
Mine carriers . . . . .	7
Armed boarding steamers . . . . .	23
Seaplane ships . . . . .	5
Portsmouth extended defence steamers . . . . .	2
Ammunition carriers . . . . .	40
Store carriers . . . . .	25
Frozen meat carriers . . . . .	5
Squadron supply ships . . . . .	15
Flotilla supply ships . . . . .	5
Special service steamers . . . . .	3
Accommodation ships . . . . .	2
Salvage ships . . . . .	1
Marconi ships . . . . .	2
Colliers . . . . .	467
Oilers . . . . .	73
Hospital ships . . . . .	11
Motor-boats . . . . .	156
For military service—	
Ships for Expeditionary Force, etc. . . . .	313
Ships engaged in Colonies (about) . . . . .	120

Harbour craft—									
Naval	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	333
Military	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	31
									3,821
Self-defensive merchantmen	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	32
Armed coasting vessels	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	51
									3,904
Australian fleet—									
Battle cruiser	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Light cruisers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4
Torpedo-boat destroyers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
Submarine	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Miscellaneous	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5
Canadian fleet—									
Cruiser	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Light cruiser	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Royal Indian marine vessels	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	7
Total									3,927

Large numbers of the smaller natures of guns, including about 70 4.7's, have been obtained from the most varied sources, some from ships operating in waters not exposed to torpedo attack, some from Japan, some from the Bethlehem Works in America, many from the Gunnery Schools, etc. The object held in view has been to arm the largest possible number of small craft employed on anti-submarine work, and also merchant ships passing through submarine-infested waters.

The following, up to the present, have been armed with guns for attack on or defence against submarines:—

Merchant steamers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	190
Yachts	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	72
Trawlers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	633
Drifters and net drifters	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	105

#### *Ammunition.*

On the outbreak of war the approved outfits were practically complete, and according to arrangements which had been prepared in advance large orders were automatically placed. These are now beginning to mature, the main flow beginning in August.

Since then the principle followed has been to place every possible order with the naval shell-makers that the trade can take. In consequence very large supplies of ammunition for all classes of guns will come to hand by the end of the year.

Since the beginning of the war we have received on the average four times as much heavy and twice as much medium shell as we have fired away, including all operations at the Dardanelles, and we are therefore in a substantially better position than at the outset, when the position was not unsatisfactory. This is particularly true of the Grand Fleet ships, for the bombarding operations have been almost entirely confined to the older vessels. Before the end of the year we shall receive eight times as much ammunition as we have fired away in the whole 10 months of the war, though, of course, there will be more ships to be provided for.

No apprehension is felt in regard to high explosives for naval purposes. In this matter we are in the hands of the War Office, but we have assured ourselves repeatedly that our wants will be met. Cordite is not quite so satisfactory, and some months ago I was distressed to find that owing to the great orders for shells that had been put out in excess of any previous plan, the projectiles were, after July, getting a good deal ahead of the propellant. Mr. Balfour, at my request, very kindly held an independent inquiry into this, and made a report which is reassuring. From this it appears we began the war with 23,000 tons of cordite. Since then we have fired away 1,500 tons and have received 8,000. Before the end of the year we shall receive 13,000 tons under existing orders. This takes no account

of the new Admiralty factory which is being built at Poole, or of the factory at the Firth of Forth which Lord Moulton is undertaking as an emergency matter.

Every nerve should be strained to increase the supply of naval ammunition, as the expenditure in a Fleet battle at long range may be very large. We were working up to a total of three outfits a ship; but we ought not to stop there.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Torpedoes.*

We are well ahead with our supply of torpedoes and shall be for 3 or 4 months to come, but so great is the volume of new construction requiring torpedoes, that our greatly expanded resources will be strained to keep pace with it towards the close of the year. The expenditure of torpedoes since the action in the Heligoland Bight late in August last has been very small from the fact that no targets are presented to our submarines or destroyers, and there is no reason to suppose that this condition will not continue.

#### *Fuel.*

The coaling arrangements of the Fleet have proved in every respect satisfactory. The supply of oil fuel, which in time of peace had excited much apprehension, and had been the object of special study, has presented no difficulty. A table showing the present consumption and position follows. A second table showing the comparison of our actual expenditure in war with the War Staff estimates prepared more than two years ago also follows.<sup>2</sup> It will be seen that our anticipations erred to a reasonable extent upon the side of safety. Our oil reserve now stands at nearly 1,000,000 tons, well dispersed and a large proportion kept afloat. The sea routes are perfectly safe, the prices not exorbitant, and the sources from which we can draw very numerous.

#### *Aircraft.*

The Royal Naval Air Service has expanded from 98 officers and 595 men at the beginning of the war to 895 officers and 8,039 men at the present time. This, however, includes the armoured car squadrons and the anti-aircraft defence. A paper is attached<sup>3</sup> showing the latest numbers and dispositions of the naval seaplanes and aeroplanes, from which it will appear that we have at present about 250 machines ready to fly. Making allowance for the loss of two a day, we shall have by September 1 about 600 aircraft, and by the end of the year about 1,200 machines of all kinds, including a number of very large ones. Extensive arrangements have been made for the supply of bombs, principally the 20 lb., 112 lb., and the 500 lb. bombs. The last-named carries a bursting charge 30 per cent. larger than that of the 15-inch shell. We have at present 178 pilots trained and 99 in training, and it has been proposed to raise these numbers by the end of the year to about 500, allowing for wastage.

W. S. C.

<sup>1</sup> This was an excessive provision.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

May 30, 1915.

## APPENDIX H

### FIRST LORD'S MINUTES

#### DOVER DEFENCES

January 2, 1915.

I have asked on other papers that a précis should be made of the past history since the War began of the Dover Harbour defences. Every anticipation with regard to progress has been falsified. The extent of the preparations of the ships to be sunk has been extended, and work has been pushed on very leisurely with them. Delays have been continual, and now, finally, when the *Montrose* was prepared for sinking, the opportunity of a good day was missed, and the vessel has been allowed to remain in a position where she has broken adrift and is probably on the Goodwins.<sup>1</sup> I cannot think that this is a creditable performance. I wish also to receive a full report of the circumstances under which the *Montrose* was allowed to remain in a dangerous position when the weather was getting continually worse, and who is responsible for it.

W. S. C.

#### FLEET STRENGTH AND THE MANNING POLICY

Secretary.  
First Sea Lord.  
Chief of the Staff.

January 13, 1915.

A decision is required in regard to the strength of the War Fleet we should aim at for the 1st January, 1916, in order that manning arrangements may be adjusted. So far we have simply commissioned every ship we could lay our hands on, and only laid up the 'Edgars.' But the great numbers of fine ships completing during the present year make it necessary that we should set a limit to the number of ships maintained in full commission, and lay up a certain number of old ships as new ones join. It is not desirable, if it can be avoided, that officers and men should be sent to sea in vessels of such low fighting quality that they are an easy prey.

The accession of twenty new cruisers between the declaration of war and the end of this year should make it possible to lay up a certain number of the oldest cruisers, particularly the 'P' class and the 'Didos.' Other ships that deserve scrutiny from this point of view are, for instance:—

*Sutlej, Amphitrite, Europa, Argonaut, Euryalus, Charybdis, Bacchante, Eclipse, Highflyer, Challenger, Dwarf, Hyacinth, Astræa, and Fox.*

These vessels carry a great number of men in the highest state of efficiency. A good many of them are no doubt required for particular operations in connection with colonial expeditions and against the Turks. But we must recognize that none of them is any use against the only kind of light cruiser which the Germans would break out with, and every one of them would be an easy prey to a battle-cruiser.

The sound principle promulgated by Lord Fisher of using the fewest number of good ships to do the work on foreign stations, and of resisting a tendency to take comfort from the mere possession of numbers of unsuitable vessels, is applicable in war no less than in peace. We have also in commission forty-two armed merchant cruisers, which are much better suited to producing numerical strength than these old light cruisers. It is not suggested that any of these old ships when laid up should be dismantled. On the contrary, they should be kept with reduced nucleus crews ready for special service if required, or to replace casualties. But each should be the subject of careful examination, and a roster of withdrawals from active commission should be prepared and fitted in so as to make trained and seasoned complements, who have worked together as ships' companies, available for the splendid new vessels coming forward.

With regard to the old battleships of the 'Majestic' and 'Canopus' classes,

<sup>1</sup> She was.

of which, including the *Revenge*, there are sixteen, these are required for special bombarding purposes, but they will not all be required at once, and in May or June, when the monitors arrive, at least half should be placed in reduced nucleus crews (Third Fleet scale), and kept in the highest state of readiness so as to take the places of sister ships damaged or lost in action; twelve or fifteen old ships thus placed in reserve will give us, with other increases of our personnel resources, the means of manning the new ships which are coming forward with crews of the highest efficiency.

W. S. C.

### THE TRENCH-ROLLER

Director of the Air Division.  
Director of Contracts.  
Third Sea Lord.

January 18, 1915.

I wish the following experiment made at once:—

Two ordinary steam-rollers are to be fastened together side by side by very strong steel connections, so that they are to all intents and purposes one roller covering a breadth of at least 12 to 14 feet. If convenient, one of the back inside wheels might be removed and the other axle joined up to it. Some trenches are to be dug on the latest principles somewhere handy near London in lengths of at least 100 yards, the earth taken out of the trenches being thrown on each side, as is done in France. The roller is to be driven along these trenches, one outer rolling wheel on each side, and the inner rolling wheel just clear of the trench itself. The object is to ascertain what amount of weight is necessary in the roller to smash the trench in. For this purpose as much weight as they can possibly draw should be piled on to the steam-rollers and on the framework buckling them together. The ultimate object is to run along a line of trenches, crushing them all flat and burying the people in them.

If the experiment is successful with the steam-rollers fastened together on this improvised system, stronger and larger machines can be made with bigger driving wheels and proper protection for the complements, and the rollers of these machines will be furnished with wedge-shaped ribs or studs, which can be advanced beyond the ordinary surface of the wheel when required, in order to break the soil on each side of the trench and accentuate the rolling process.

The matter is extremely urgent, and should be pressed to the utmost. Really the only difficulty you have got to surmount is to prevent the steam-rollers from breaking apart. The simplicity of the device, if it succeeds, is its virtue. All that is required is a roller of sufficient breadth and with wheels properly fitted, and an unscaleable bullet-proof house for the crew. Three or four men would be quite enough, and as the machine is only worked by night it would not be required to stand against artillery.

In a fortnight I wish to see these trials.

W. S. C.

### THE MANNING POLICY

February 6, 1915.

Director of the Mobilization Department.

The procedure which should be adopted in regard to manning ships like *Warspite*, *Canada*, and other new ships of the highest power, should be as follows:—

A new crew should be prepared at the depots for the oldest First Fleet battleship convenient—say, *King Edward VII*—instead of, as now, for the new ship. When the training of this new crew is complete, they should relieve the old crew of the *King Edward VII*, and this relieved crew should go on board the new ship, plus any additions that may be required, which additions must have been carefully considered beforehand. In this way a first-class complement of active service ratings will be provided for a ship of the greatest power, with good and highly trained officers acquainted with Grand Fleet work, who know each other and have been accustomed to work together.<sup>1</sup>

W. S. C.

<sup>1</sup> It was a great pity this system was not adopted.

## AIRSHIPS AND AEROPLANES

Secretary.

First Sea Lord.

Fourth Sea Lord.

Director of the Air Division.

January 18, 1915.

The general condition of our airship service, and the fact that so little progress has been made by Vickers in the construction of the rigid airship now due, makes it necessary to suspend the purely experimental work in connection with airships during the war, and to concentrate our attention on the more practical aeroplane, in which we have been so successful.

1. The Director of Contracts should, in conjunction with the Director of the Air Division, make proposals for suspending altogether the construction of the Vickers rigid airship. The material which has been accumulated should be stored, and the shed in which it is being constructed should be thus set free.

2. The repairing staff of the airships, which is now at Farnborough, should be moved with the utmost despatch to Barrow, and should be accommodated in the neighbourhood of the new rigid airship shed and make the shed their repairing shop. Arrangements should be made to this effect with Vickers, so that we take over this shed completely from them during the war.

3. The Farnborough sheds are to be handed back to the Army as soon as possible, thus meeting their urgent demands.

4. Messrs. Vickers are to be urged to expedite as much as possible the two non-rigid airships they are building in the old Admiralty shed at Barrow. These, when completed, will give us five airships—three Parsevals and two Astra Torres, besides the small military ones. These five airships will be accommodated, three in the wooden shed at Kingsnorth, and two in the old Admiralty shed at Barrow. The iron shed at Kingsnorth will thus become available for the large numbers of aeroplanes which are now being delivered. All necessary steps must be taken to enable aeroplanes in skilful hands to alight or ascend from the neighbourhood of Kingsnorth.

5. Temporary housing accommodation for the aeroplane staff is to be at once provided near Kingsnorth, which is to become an aeroplane as well as an airship base.

\* \* \* \* \*

7. The personnel of the Royal Naval Airship Service is to be reduced to the minimum required to man and handle the five airships. The balance, including especially the younger naval officers, are to be transferred to the aeroplane section. The military officers are to remain with the airships. I am not at all convinced of the utility of keeping this detachment at Dunkirk, and unless they are able to show some good reason for their existence they should be withdrawn.

W. S. C.

## AEROPLANE POLICY

Director of the Air Division.

April 3, 1915.

1. The paper handed in by Commander Longmore should be approved in principle, and should guide us in the types of machines to be developed. The Curtiss machine should be fully tested and worked up here, being replaced by other machines at Dunkirk. In particular, the following two types should be developed:—

(a) The heavy bomb-dropping type, capable of carrying upwards of 500 lb. of explosives for a 150-mile journey there and back; and

(b) The superlative small fighting machine with great rising power and speed, single-seater, and with a Lewis gun firing through a deflector propeller.

2. I attach great importance to the development of photography. It is certain to be required for important reconnaissances from May onwards. You must take steps to make sure that in this and in artillery spotting we are kept fully abreast of the latest Army progress. They have had more experience, and we should take every opportunity of learning from them.

3. The torpedo seaplane must be strenuously pressed forward, the object being to use at least ten machines carrying torpedoes for a night attack on German ships-of-war at anchor.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The neglect and maltreatment of this scheme was one of the great crimes of the war.



4. Whenever possible all machines should be constructed so as to use their weight-carrying powers in different ways, so that, according to the service required, fuel, arms, a gun, explosives, or a passenger can be carried.

5. The object now to be aimed at from June will not be reconnaissance and patrolling, but the attacking with bombs on the largest possible scale of military points on enemy territory. For this, weight of explosives and numbers of machines are more necessary than skill of pilots or special fighting qualities in the machines. We shall by then have passed the stage of daring exploits, and must acquire the power to strike heavy blows which will produce decisive effects on the enemy's fighting strength. The carrying of two to three tons of explosives to a particular point of attack in a single night or day is the least we should aim at as an operation in the future. All possible objectives should be studied and special reports made upon them. The capacities of machines should be considered in relation to these definite tasks.

6. Every effort should be made to reach 1,000 aeroplanes and 300 seaplanes as early as possible before the end of the present year; 400 pilots will be required and all arrangements should be made to procure and train them.

7. The progress made so far, and the great expansion of the Air Service which is in progress, is considered very satisfactory, and reflects great credit on all concerned.

W. S. C.

### A MINING PROJECT

Secretary.

First Sea Lord.

Chief of the Staff.

*January 20, 1915.*

This is a proposal to lay 57 miles of mines in two or three rows at the southern end of the existing minefields, with a view to blocking the entrance to the English Channel. This would, no doubt, be an effective barrier against enemy heavy ships, but are they likely to come there? and would it not be very satisfactory to us if they did? What would they do when they got there? How would they get back? Is not the existing minefield a sufficient deterrent, having regard to the military unwisdom of the enterprise?

Against submarines, on the other hand, the minefield would be no barrier at all. Zeebrugge has already been encircled with French and British mines without preventing the submarines from going in and out with impunity. Our submarines have repeatedly traversed German minefields in the Heligoland Bight. Two of them went in through the Libau minefield. If there were good grounds for thinking that mines laid at 50 yards' intervals would stop submarines the case would be made out. But these are the only craft we are likely to want to stop, and these are the very craft we cannot stop. It is a delusion to suppose we can.

2,500 mines, approximately, would be required at 50 yards' intervals. It is therefore 4 or 5 to 1 in favour of the submarine—even if the field is quite intact—passing any particular line. Experience shows that the minefield will not remain intact, and that great gaps will soon be made by mines exploding in rough water or breaking adrift. Moreover, the 20-feet rise and fall of the tide renders the minefield harmless to small craft like submarines at each high water. It is no barrier—it is no deterrent. If the mines are to be placed at intervals of 25 yards the protection would be greater, but 5,000 mines would be required. That would exhaust our whole stock. To get over the tide difficulty, two, if not three, mines should be fastened on one string—i.e., 15,000 mines would be required, or three times what we have.

The objection taken by the Chief of the Staff as to danger to our own ships from drifting mines and hampering our operations also seems to me very serious.

W. S. C.

### CORDITE

Secretary and others.

*January 25, 1915.*

The position set forth in these papers is serious, and calls for prompt action.

I understand that, since the Director of Contracts' minute of the 9th January was written the War Office have written officially to say that, after careful consideration by their experts, American gun-cotton cannot be used for the manufacture of cordite, and that this affects the estimated output from Nobel's

during 1915. Consequently there is very little chance of our obtaining for the Navy this year from Nobel's any part of the 1,800 tons included in the 4,000 tons that the proposals put forward in these papers were intended to provide. The net result is that of the additional 10,000 tons of cordite required for the Navy by the end of this year we are not likely to get more than 2,200 tons from three firms (Curtis & Harvey, National Explosives Company, and the Cotton and Powder Company), and then only with the assistance of Government subsidies to the extent of £275,000.

If it is the case that it is impossible for Nobel's to deliver any part of these additional requirements for the Navy during 1915, it is clearly a waste of money to subsidize the firm to the extent of the £850,000 proposed. This money could be put to better use by starting a naval factory of our own; and I wish to have proposals worked out and submitted to me with the least possible delay. The object to be attained is the establishment of an independent naval factory that will begin to produce cordite at the rate of 400 or 500 tons a month from June or July onwards.

In the meantime the proposals put forward in these papers (excepting that relating to Nobel's) are approved, and every effort should be made to enable the three remaining firms to increase their estimated output.

W. S. C.

Secretary.

Third Sea Lord.

Director of Naval Ordnance.

Director of Contracts.

*February 12, 1915.*

The cordite question must be grappled with with more vigour and on a larger scale. If the establishment of a factory to produce 500 tons a month is not sufficient, why is the factory not established on double or treble the scale? Whatever delays there may be in bringing deliveries into effect can certainly be overcome by the autumn of the present year. We have very large reserves of propellant at hand to last us through the earlier parts of the year, and what you are responsible for is to make sure that we are in a position to cope with all emergencies that may arise in the latter part. Do not, therefore, hesitate to make proposals to meet the deficiency which you have shown on the current paper. Very large quantities of ammunition of all kinds and propellant will certainly be required during the closing months of this year.

Please report further.

W. S. C.

Secretary.

First Sea Lord.

*February 12, 1915.*

In view of the apprehended shortage of cordite towards the end of the year, the expenditure of no less than 2,000 tons of practice ammunition should be reconsidered. It does not appear to me to be equally important that all ships should fire their full allowance. The best ships should be given the preference, and of these ships, those which have had opportunities of firing in action, whether at land or sea targets, do not surely require to repeat all their practices.

W. S. C.

#### FINANCIAL PROCEDURE

Secretary.

*February 12, 1915.*

This minute of the Treasury should be circulated to all departments concerned, and initialled by all Admiralty officers involved. It is of the highest importance that Admiralty contracts made during the war should, after a fair allowance for the exceptional conditions prevailing, stand the severe subsequent parliamentary scrutiny to which they will certainly be subjected.

W. S. C.

#### EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS

Secretary.

*February 13, 1915.*

The Admiralty are of opinion that an exchange of military prisoners of war, man for man, particularly officers, would be beneficial to this country.

First, because, owing to the size of our Regular Army before the war, an exchange of equal numbers secures us a return of a larger proportion of our trained fighting strength.

Secondly, as the enemy will receive an equal number of mouths to feed in exchange, the difficulties of his food problem are not lessened.

Thirdly, when a belligerent is being reduced by process of famine, it is undesirable that large bodies of prisoners of war should be in his hands, as the temptation to expose these to undue suffering is obvious.

Finally, we have more German prisoners of military age than they have of our men, and therefore when the exchanges were completed there would still remain a balance in our hands in case of exceptional action on the part of the enemy, and we should not be leaving a balance of prisoners in his hands for the treatment of whom we should have no security.

But if the principle of exchange of prisoners is to be adopted, it should be upon a regular system and on a large scale, and the pairing off of individual Admirals and Generals or of persons of distinction on either side is to be strongly deprecated as affording no real diminution of human suffering while involving unnecessary and undesirable parleyings with the enemy. These should always be kept at the minimum.

W. S. C.

#### ANTI-MINE AND ANTI-TORPEDO DEVICES

March 22, 1915.

I am sure it is perfectly easy to fit temporary wooden mine-fenders on to ships of war, and there must be many ways of doing this. All proposals, however, are always derided and broken down by the naval constructors and naval officers because it is said that they will not stand the stresses which arise in a seaway. The consequence is that, though for seven or eight months this clear remedy has been staring us in the face, very little progress has been made and no real result achieved. Here, in the Dardanelles, the operations will take place in landlocked waters, where no violent motion can be expected, and it is to my mind most deplorable that invaluable makeshifts adapted to smooth water should have been ruled out just because perfection for ocean purposes has not been obtained. I have tried my best time after time during the last six months, and have made numbers of suggestions, and so has Sir Arthur Wilson; but the only result is that things are brought to a standstill by the sterile criticisms of persons who make no positive proposals themselves, and by general inertia. If the deep-keeled caissons which I proposed two years ago, and which were assented to six months ago, had been carried through, we should now have a certain means of passing the torpedo-tubes of the Narrows, and also a means of mooring two of them into a V-shaped shield in front of the bows of a battleship while engaged with the forts.

It is too late to do anything for the Dardanelles now. Can we not turn over a new leaf, however, in regard to the future, and make proper temporary attachments for ships which will have to work in submarine- and mine-infested areas? Never mind if this reduces the speed of the ships, or if it spoils the look of the ships, or if it cannot be used except in fine weather. It is better to have a ship which will do what you want safely in fine weather than a ship which you dare not use in any weather for necessary purposes for fear that she should be sent to the bottom. Let us now resolve that the Director of Naval Construction's proposal to fit sections of bulges around the sides of ships shall be applied without delay to at least a dozen of the older battleships, and that all the new battleships shall be fitted with the necessary rail and rack to take them, and let orders be given to prepare the necessary caissons in large numbers. Let the deep-keeled detached caissons, approved by the Treasury in November, be now proceeded with, so that they can be moored alongside bombarding ships.

Has any report been received from the *Conqueror* about the S.C.W.'s proposals? How you can be content to let these great ships, which are your pride and on which so many millions are spent, be ruled off the warpath by mine and torpedo without regarding the remedy against these dangers as the first charge on naval inventiveness, beats my civilian mind.

W. S. C.

#### BARRIER-BREAKERS

Secretary and others.

March 22, 1915.

It appears to me that a number of tramps and old steamers should be collected at Malta without delay and filled up with barrels and wood offal, so as to render them as far as possible unsinkable, and that fourteen or fifteen of these vessels

should be held in readiness to act as "barrier-breakers" when the fire of the forts at the Dardanelles has been quelled. If anything like a rush is required at the critical moment, the whole fleet of these vessels, manned by small crews of volunteers, driven on in front of the fleet and in front of the fleet sweepers, may be an indispensable precaution. Numbers will count both as offering distracting targets for the enemy and exploding more mines in the channel.

W. S. C.

### INTERCEPTING AMMUNITION

Director of the Intelligence Division.

*March 23, 1915.*

It now becomes of the utmost importance to stop the passage of war material for Turkey through Roumania and Bulgaria. The Governments of both these countries have declared their intention of stopping it, but no doubt there is a lot of corruption among the smaller people, and smuggling under one form or another of ammunition and arms must be going on. It is essential that this should be stopped. Discuss the matter with the Foreign Office this morning, and make me proposals which commend themselves to them. Numbers of suitable Roumanian and Bulgarian agents should be engaged by us to watch the railways and canals ceaselessly, and money should be freely spent to make it worth while for Roumanians and Bulgarians employed on the railways to give us timely information of any wagonloads of ammunition passing. With this information our Ministers can put the Governments in motion. Not a day should be lost in instituting this most necessary service.

W. S. C.

### THE SMOKE FLOTILLA

*April 5, 1915.*

1. The attached telegram should be sent to the Admiral-Superintendent, Malta. The Chief Inspector of Naval Ordnance will insert full description of the method and appliances. Director of Transports will provide the vessel. Director of Stores will provide the benzol. Malta Yard will make all preparations meanwhile.

Let me have dates of sailing and arrival at Mudros, where the prepared cone-bearing ships will await her. The whole matter is most urgent.

2. A telegram should be drafted by the Chief Inspector of Naval Ordnance to the Russian Admiralty cancelling our last recommendation, and giving the details of the improved method. Let me see draft.

3. Another complete outfit of eight small vessels with three cones apiece is to be prepared for home service and for experiments, and all the necessary stores are to be purchased. Meanwhile further experiments are to continue with a view to improvements. A smoke flotilla is to be definitely constituted; an intelligent young officer to be put in charge, with the smoke vessels manned like the trawlers; the whole to be well organized and to practise making smoke. This flotilla will be stationed on the West Coast of Scotland, where it can practise in smooth waters without attracting undue attention.

4. Proposals should be also put forward for four fast motor-boats to burn one cone each, it being essential to have the power to throw smoke quickly from a particular point under fire under cover of this smoke before the slower vessels arrive to complete the obscurity.

5. Proposals are to be put forward showing what alterations would be required in four ex-coastal destroyers taken from the Nore defence to enable them to burn two cones for eight hours. The Director of Naval Construction will report on this and what time it would take to fit these vessels when the order is given.

These proposals supersede the previous proposal.

All proposals, whether for the organization of personnel or *matériel*, to be put forward immediately. Naval Secretary to co-ordinate. Action to proceed in anticipation of further sanction.

W. S. C.

### THE ARMAMENT OF THE LATEST GERMAN BATTLESHIPS

*March 27, 1915.*

This is a very alarmist letter, and twists all the facts into the most unfavourable position. The Commander-in-Chief assumes that six new Dreadnoughts, all armed

with 15-inch guns, will have joined the German Fleet before a single British Dreadnought so armed has joined it. This is absurd. *Warspite* joins (us) in the next few days. *Lützow* has not yet joined (them). The question of the 'König' class having 15-inch guns was searchingly investigated by the Admiralty Committee in October last. I have seen no evidence of these ships having been laid up since the war began for any period long enough to admit of such a change. They have been doing their practices and moving about quite regularly. The calculations of the Committee were made on the basis of 14-inch guns. If 15-inch guns were employed the weights would be much more seriously affected and the argument against their employment would become even more formidable. I do not believe there are any solid grounds for assuming that either the 'Lützow' or the 'König' class are armed with 15-inch guns,<sup>1</sup> but in view of the evidence and this letter of the Commander-in-Chief, the Director of Naval Ordnance's Committee of October should reassemble and make a further report on the subject.

With regard to the Third Sea Lord's minute, I wish to receive a report from him and the Director of the Intelligence Division as to what is known of the possibility of completion of the *Ersatz Hertha* and Nos. 25, 26, and 28. Our own experience of the completion of ships should teach us that battleships cannot be fitted for war service, however great are the efforts made, irrespective of a certain minimum period of time. The new battleship *Kron Prinz* may be approaching completion, but Nos. 26 and 28 cannot be in the line for many months to come.

*Queen Elizabeth* must sail for home the moment she can be spared. Meanwhile, no time is being lost, as until her turbine is repaired she could not in any case join the Grand Fleet. *Warspite* can join as soon as is convenient. I agree fully that *Barham*, *Valiant*, and *Malaya* should be brought forward with the utmost rapidity. It is to the gun-mountings that the delay is due. I cannot understand why a small point like this cannot be overcome. If men are taken off the turrets of later ships and set to work in three reliefs on the turrets of these ships, or if by taking special pains and care the turrets could be erected in the first instance on board the ship and not erected, taken to pieces, and re-erected, a couple of months could easily be saved. *Canada* also is a vessel very near completion, and the most strenuous efforts should be made to bring her into the line.

W. S. C.

#### THE SEARCH FOR GUNS

April 3, 1915.

1. The Director of Naval Ordnance has been instructed to make proposals for increasing the number of small guns available for trawlers, drifters, and merchant ships. He is to have regard to the following sources:—

- (a) All the guns now assigned to monitors, fleet sweepers, and river gunboats, other than the six accelerated monitors which are to be ready in May, can be appropriated. Other ships will be laid up before these latter vessels are commissioned and a further supply of 12-pdrs. will be released.
- (b) Ships on the North American Station, which are not exposed to torpedo attack, should surrender a part of their anti-torpedo armament.
- (c) Ships undergoing a long refit (*Drake*, *King Alfred*, *Sutley*) should surrender on loan their suitable small guns.
- (d) The sixteen 12-pdrs. now in the possession of the Royal Marines and formerly used by Colonel Osmaston's batteries, should be supplied with ship's mountings at the earliest possible moment and made available.
- (e) Sixteen armed trawlers attached to the Commander-in-Chief have two guns apiece. One of these should be surrendered at once.
- (f) The proposals in regard to the 1-inch aiming rifle put forward by the Naval Secretary at the conference on the 2nd instant should be studied and immediately developed.
- (g) A ship mounting should be designed forthwith for six and three sub-calibre guns, and trial mountings put in hand.
- (h) The despatch of the American guns purchased at Bethlehem Works should be hastened by every means, and Sir Trevor Dawson should be instructed to search for any other guns in other American works.
- (i) A careful scrutiny should be made of the 6- and 3-pdr. anti-aircraft guns with a view to seeing if they can be dispensed with. Some of these guns are

<sup>1</sup> Of course they were not.

very ineffective against aircraft, and a few 3-inch high-angle guns would be found much more effective at certain points. This, however, is the last resource.

2. Guns from the existing reserve and any obtained from the above sources will be distributed as follows:—

Fifty 12-pdrs. should go to Captain Webb for the arming of merchant steamers plying in home waters.

Half the 4.7's in reserve, together with any that can be obtained by taking one from the existing Self-Defence merchant ships, should be made available for arming ships coming home from distant voyages. The best arrangements possible should be made at London and Liverpool in regard to the 12-pdrs. at Port Said and Gibraltar, and with regard to the 4.7's, to secure, by transferring the guns to ships entering the submarine area, the greatest possible usefulness of the weapons.

All the rest of the guns are to be handed over to the Fourth Sea Lord for arming yachts, trawlers, and drifters.

Detailed proposals on both heads are to be submitted.

3. The Straits of Dover must be regarded as the main area of anti-submarine operations, and every effort must be made to render its passage by submarines difficult and dangerous. To this end, the number of armed trawlers and drifters available in the Dover patrol should be raised as speedily as possible to 100. A weekly report on the strength available should be furnished to the Board.

The indicator net defence should be carried forward on both sides to the shore, as proposed by Sir Arthur Wilson.

4. Every effort must be made to complete the cross-channel anti-submarine net. This work is of very great importance and, even if it is not wholly successful, it will be found to be a great check. The material will always be available for use elsewhere, should the tactical situation admit.

5. I am awaiting proposals for a watch being kept by our submarines on the exits from Ostend and Zeebrugge, and the proposals for laying Sir Arthur Wilson's nets in the Channel should go forward as arranged.

6. I wish to receive a report on the working of our submarine decoy and trap vessels, including the trawlers. What have they done? Where have they been working?

W. S. C.

#### SUNDAY LABOUR

Third Sea Lord.

Additional Civil Lord.

Financial Secretary.

Director of Works Department.

*April 8, 1915.*

Proposals should be submitted to me as soon as possible for the abolition of Sunday labour on Admiralty work in private shipbuilding yards throughout the country. The only exception should be urgent fleet repairs or work on vessels being specially accelerated; and with regard to these Board authority should be obtained.

Although the contractors will be thus precluded from Sunday labour, we shall not agree to the extension of the contract time for delivery, experience having shown that more work will be done without Sunday labour than with it. I do not exclude the possibility of work beginning with the night shift on Sunday night, if that is thought to be more desirable.

This matter should be settled with the utmost speed.

W. S. C.

#### WIRELESS FOR SUBMARINES

*April 23, 1915.*

I await a special report on the fitting of oversea submarines and selected destroyers with special long-distance wireless. It is indispensable that a submarine should be able to communicate with our receiving stations when operating in the Heligoland Bight. It is also necessary that a certain number of destroyers should have the special faculty of long-distance communication in order that they may be used in connection with submarines.

The matter is urgent.

W. S. C.

## MINE FENDERS

*April 24, 1915.*

This paper shows that there are now fifteen different types of bow mine-catching gear which are being experimented with in addition to the timber nose-caps and the net wings; total, seventeen. Side by side with these numerous suggestions, and after very many months' work, there is an almost total absence of definite results. I consider that concentration upon the three or four best types is now necessary. A small committee of four (consisting of the Third Sea Lord, Admiral Charlton, the Director of Naval Construction, and the Naval Secretary) should sit to review the whole subject, and should make proposals for concentration on the most promising results in the shortest possible time.

W. S. C.

## SOUND SIGNALLING

Secretary.

First Sea Lord.

Sir Arthur Wilson.

Assistant Director of Torpedoes.

*April 24, 1915.*

. . . The system of sound signalling, enabling one submarine to communicate with another, has been toyed with for a long time, and it is necessary now to produce practical results, even if of a crude and imperfect character, which can be made rapidly effective. A report should be furnished within three days, stating what is possible and making proposals for action.

W. S. C.

## AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Director of the Air Division.

*April 24, 1915.*

What are you doing about photography from aeroplanes? I am informed that you have only got one officer actively engaged in this, and that no satisfactory photographs have yet been taken by the Naval Wing. This matter is of great importance and urgency. After the assistance which we have given to the Army in the matter of aeroplanes, we may expect from them every possible aid in repairing our deficiencies in this branch of aerial work. Pray see General Henderson yourself without delay, and make sure that we are in a position, either by borrowing a couple of cameras or photographers from the Army or by any other method which is effective, to take the photographs required any day after the 1st May. Report to me that this will be done.

W. S. C.

## APPENDIX I

### LORD FISHER'S RESIGNATION

The first edition of this work had already appeared when I received a letter from Captain Thomas Crease, Lord Fisher's Naval Assistant, which threw new light on some of the minor aspects of Lord Fisher's resignation. From this I print the relevant extracts.

#### *Captain Crease to Mr. Churchill*

The definite and immediate reason for Lord Fisher's resignation in the early morning hours of May 15th, was not the telegram concerning the despatch of our cruisers to the Adriatic, sent by you on the 14th and marked '1st Sea Lord to see after action.' The copy of this telegram was opened by me on the night of the 14th, in the course of my duties as Naval Assistant to the First Sea Lord, at which time Lord Fisher had already gone to bed, and it was not seen by him till late next day as he did not come to the Admiralty during the morning. The telegram was certainly not the spark that fired the train, though undoubtedly it fed the flames.

The real reason for Lord Fisher's resignation at that moment was the minute which you wrote to him somewhere about 11 p.m. on the 14th May, and which he read probably about 5 a.m. on 15th May. This minute is not given in full in your Book, two paragraphs at the end being omitted in your text as printed on pages 355 and 356, and there are also differences in the direction of the minute and minor discrepancies in the body. I think it is necessary, therefore, for the sake of Lord Fisher's reputation and for historical accuracy, now to draw special attention to this minute and to the circumstances in which it was written. All the reasons you have suggested in your Book for Lord Fisher's resignation on that early morning, except the telegram, were equally as valid on the night of the 14th when you parted so amicably, as the morning of the 15th, and as I have stated, the telegram had nothing to do with the matter. Without the powerful reason of this particular minute Lord Fisher's action in resigning would appear to be due to vacillation and indecision, if nothing worse, and a most undeserved slur is cast on his memory.

In Chapter XVIII of your Book you describe the events of 14th May, leading up to your long discussion with Lord Fisher in the evening. At the end of that interview I could see that you yourself were obviously much relieved in your mind, and Lord Fisher also parted from you on quite amicable terms. He told me at once that he had had a very satisfactory discussion with you, and that he had peaceably settled with you what ships and reinforcements should go to the Dardanelles, and that I 'need not pack up just yet'—earlier in the afternoon, after his return from the War Council, he had informed me that he felt he could not stop much longer as First Sea Lord. He told me exactly what ships it had been arranged to send to the Dardanelles, and gave me some minor instructions in regard to this matter, and he then signed his papers and went home and to bed. The arrangements made, as I then understood from him, so far as ships were concerned, embraced only six large Monitors and four 'Edgar' Class fitted with bulges.

Late that night, about midnight, I was working in my room when your Principal Private Secretary, Mr. Masterton-Smith, brought me a minute from you to Lord Fisher, with the direction that Lord Fisher was to receive it first thing in the morning. I read this minute, which I understood had just been prepared and then told Mr. Masterton-Smith that in my opinion Lord Fisher would resign immediately if he received it.

I have been given a copy of the minute by Mr. George Lambert, with a view to its publication, and therefore I now reproduce it, as follows:—



May 14, 1915.

'MY DEAR FISHER,

I send this to you before marking it to others, in order that if any point arises we can discuss it.

I hope you will agree.

Yours ever,

(Initd.) W.'

(Enclosure)

First Sea Lord.

1. The fifth 15-inch howitzer with 50 rounds of ammunition should go to the Dardanelles with the least possible delay, being sent by special train across France and re-embarked at Marseilles. Let me have a time-table showing by what date it can arrive at the Dardanelles.

The two 9.2-inch guns will go to the Dardanelles, either in the two monitors prepared for them or separately for mounting on shore. This will be decided as soon as we hear from Vice-Admiral de Robeck.

2. The following 9 heavy monitors should go in succession to the Dardanelles as soon as they are ready:—*Admiral Farragut, General Grant, Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, Lord Clive, Prince Rupert, Sir John Moore, General Craufurd and Marshal Ney.*

The first 6 of the 9.2-inch monitors should also go unless the Admiral chooses to have two of their guns for work on shore, in which case the first 4 only will go.

A time-table should be prepared showing the dates on which they can be despatched and will arrive. They can calibrate on the Turks. All necessary steps for their sea-worthiness on the voyage should be taken.

In the case of the 9.2-inch monitors it may be found better to send the actual guns out to Malta separately.

It is clear that when this large accession of force reaches the Vice-Admiral, he should be able to spare a portion of his battleships for service in Home Waters, but it may be better to see how the monitors work and what use they are to him before raising this point.

3. Four of the 'Edgars' with special bulge protection against the mine and torpedo are now ready. They carry ten 6-inch guns each and supply the medium armament which the monitors lack. They should be specially useful for supporting the Army at night without risk from torpedo attack. They would also be useful at a later stage in passing a shore torpedo tube or escorting other ships that were passing.

We have not found any satisfactory employment for them here.

It is not necessary to provide crews for them: working parties which can take them out will be sufficient. The Admiral can man them from his large Fleet for any special service that may be required. They should start as soon as possible.

Let me have a report on the manning possibilities as defined above and times by which they can arrive.

It will be for consideration when these vessels are on the spot whether a valuable ship like the *Chatham* should not be released for other duties.

4. The Third Sea Lord will make proposals for providing anti-mine protection for a proportion of the battleships employed, on the lines proposed at our discussion.

5. The following increased provision will be made for the Air Service.

(D.A.D. will supply on verbal instructions.)

6. During this month 5 new Submarines are delivered, viz., S2, E18, V2, V3 and S3. In June the Montreal boats come in. Therefore, in view of the request of the Vice-Admiral, I consider that two more E boats should be sent to Dardanelles.

(Initd.) W. S. C.

May 14, 1915.

It was obvious to me that this minute went beyond the agreement regarding reinforcements of ships and materials for the Dardanelles, which Lord Fisher told me himself he reached with you earlier in the evening, and which he considered to be the ultimate lengths to which he was prepared to go in order to meet your views. Knowing Lord Fisher's frame of mind, I felt sure that this, coming at that

moment and within a few hours of the previous agreement which he considered final, would be the last straw.

I discussed the matter at some length with Mr. Masterton-Smith, and finally he took the minute back to you, to report what I had said before definitely handing it to me for despatch. After some delay, Mr. Masterton-Smith handed me back the minute and said it must be sent on, as you felt certain that Lord Fisher would not object to the dispositions proposed and in any case it was necessary that they should be made.

Lord Fisher probably read the minute about 5 o'clock next morning, 15th May, and as I had anticipated, soon after wrote and sent you his resignation.

I now have no doubt whatever in my mind as to what occurred in connexion with this fateful minute. You had prepared it during the course of the afternoon, and addressed it to 'Secretary,' 'First Sea Lord' and 'Chief of Staff' in that rotation. Before despatching it, however, you decided to discuss the matter personally with the First Sea Lord at your interview during the evening, and after doing this you took away the minute. This would account for me not having seen it in the original form. Late at night you altered the minute and added to it, and then sent it on, directed to Lord Fisher only, and with the covering letter, when I saw it for the first time. Apart from the points already referred to, there is the correction from your original version (as printed in the Book) regarding the ten guns of the 'Edgar' Class and a change in the wording about the shore torpedo-tubes, which demonstrate that the minute was revised.

The additional paragraphs relate to the despatch of Aircraft (which did not especially concern Lord Fisher) and also to the despatch of two more E class submarines, which concerned him vitally. I believe, also, that the final minute included more monitors than had been agreed during the evening, but I cannot be certain on this point. Lord Fisher's letter of resignation of 15th May refers to 'the increasing *daily* requirements of the Dardanelles to meet your views,' and his further letter of 16th May says 'until the series of fresh naval arrangements for the Dardanelles you sent me yesterday morning convinced me that the time had arrived to take a final decision—there being much more in these proposals than had occurred to me the previous evening when you suggested *some of them*.' Lord Fisher, correctly or incorrectly, had conceived that he had reached a final and binding agreement with you on the evening of the 14th, and he was not prepared to have further reinforcements proposed within a few hours of this agreement being made, and therefore he resigned.

I understand that you have no complete copy of this minute amongst your records and that you have no recollection of preparing and sending it, which of course explains the omission of the full document in your narrative of these events. . . . I think that in the rest of the narrative you have been quite fair and just to Lord Fisher.

To this letter I made the following reply:—

*Mr. Churchill to Captain Crease*

I am very much obliged to you for your letter, and am deeply interested to learn your view of the reasons which actuated Lord Fisher in his final decision to resign. I am glad to think that my surmise that he was offended by the terms of my minute about the cruisers that were sent to Italy, and by the fact that they were despatched in anticipation of his formal sanction, was incorrect. I shall certainly not dispute your view that the real reason was the minute which you quote in your letter in its final and amplified form. As Lord Fisher carried this minute off with him when he resigned, it was not filed with my other papers and it had passed completely from my mind. An exhaustive search among my papers has failed to produce a copy of it. Otherwise I should certainly have printed it, and I will willingly now secure for it the fullest publicity.

It is only necessary for me to make the briefest observations upon it.

In my conversation with Lord Fisher in the evening of May 14 to which you refer, we reached, as you say, a general agreement on the immediate reinforcements to be despatched at that juncture to the Dardanelles. But this could not be regarded in the nature of a final bargain or treaty between separate or hostile powers. Obviously a duty lay upon the First Sea Lord no less than upon me to sustain the

Fleet and Army at the Dardanelles by every means possible without endangering our main position in the North Sea, and any reasonable and practicable succour that was available must at least be open to discussion between us. I can only suppose that further reflection and heart-searching on the problem between the time when Lord Fisher retired to rest and I, late in the night, completed the final edition of my minute, led me to feel that the two submarines were an essential part of the proper treatment of the problem. The Admirals on the spot was evidently asking for them, and Mr. Balfour's Board, which succeeded mine, sent them and a good many more and by this agency alone nearly paralysed the Turkish communications across the Marmora. I cannot therefore feel that I was wrong in wishing to include them among the proposals sent to the First Sea Lord, not as matters decided upon, but for consideration and discussion as I was careful to make plain in my covering note to the minute. I do not recollect, nor does Sir James Masterton-Smith, that the addition of these two submarines to the reinforcements was over represented to me at your instance as being likely to cause a fatal disagreement. If something of this sort was said to me, it certainly made no impression on my mind either at the time or afterwards. The addition of the two submarines must have appeared to me as not raising any new question of principle between me and the First Sea Lord, and at the same time most necessary in itself. That being so, it was clearly my duty to make the proposal. That this item, the dimensions of which can be fully judged and which until you visited me had passed entirely from my mind, should have precipitated the disastrous events which followed, only invests with deeper melancholy the tragedy of the Dardanelles.

## APPENDIX J

### BRITISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN OFFICIAL CASUALTY RETURNS.

#### TOTAL BRITISH CASUALTIES ON THE WESTERN FRONT MONTH BY MONTH.

*Taken from 'The Military Effort,' page 253 et seq.*

1914.	August . . .	14,409		November . .	46,238
	September . .	15,189		December . .	13,803
	October . . .	30,192	1917.	January . . .	15,289
	November . .	24,785		February . .	26,140
	December . .	11,079		March . . .	25,788
1915.	January . . .	6,542		April . . .	120,070
	February . .	9,195		May . . .	76,040
	March . . .	24,483		June . . .	75,123
	April . . .	31,264		July . . .	84,695
	May . . .	65,730		August . . .	81,080
	June . . .	22,563		September . .	81,249
	July . . .	16,315		October . . .	119,808
	August . . .	14,587		November . .	73,888
	September . .	59,615		December . .	38,620
	October . . .	25,909	1918.	January . . .	13,042
	November . .	9,263		February . .	9,809
	December . .	11,117		March . . .	173,721
1916.	January . . .	10,975		April . . .	143,168
	February . .	13,014		May . . .	69,049
	March . . .	18,949		June . . .	32,436
	April . . .	22,409		July . . .	32,562
	May . . .	24,661		August . . .	122,272
	June . . .	39,959		September . .	114,831
	July . . .	196,081		October . . .	121,046
	August . . .	75,249		November . .	20,925
	September . .	115,056			
	October . . .	66,852		Total . . .	<u>2,706,154</u>

PERTES DES ARMEES FRANÇAISES (NORD-EST ET ORIENT) REPARTIES PAR PERIODES.  
*Journal Officiel, Documents parlementaires, Session Extraordinaire 1920, Annexe 633, Séance du 29 Mars, 1920, proposition de  
résolution Marin.*

(Ces chiffres ne comprennent pas les officiers.)

Date.	Designation.	Morts sur le Terrain disparus et prisonniers.	Morts dans le forma- tions sanitaires et hôpitaux de la zone des armées.	Morts dans les hôpitaux de la zone l'intérieur.	Evacués sur l'intérieur.
Août-Septembre, 1914	Bataille des frontières (Août 6-Septembre 5) et Bataille de la Marne (Septembre 6-13)	313,000	7,000	9,000	400,000
Octobre-Novembre, 1914	La course à la mer, l'Bataille d'Artois, l'Yser	104,000	11,000	10,000	180,000
Décembre, 1914-Jan., 1915	Stabilisation	62,000	5,000	7,000	171,000
Février-Mars., 1915	1 Offensive de 1915 (1 Bataille de Champagne)	55,000	7,000	9,000	306,000
Avril-Mai-Juin, 1915	2 Bataille d'Artois	121,000	13,000	3,000	145,000
1	Stabilisation	39,000	6,000	9,000	279,000
2	2 offensive 1915 (2 Bataille Champagne, 2 Bataille d'Artois)	115,000	10,000	2,000	56,000
Sept.-Novembre, 1915	Stabilisation	15,000	5,000	8,000	263,000
Décembre, 1915-Jan., 1916	Bataille défensive de Verdun	156,000	15,000	6,000	205,000
Février-Juin, 1916	Bataille de la Somme	114,000	16,000	3,000	55,000
1	Bataille offensive de Verdun	30,000	5,000	6,000	78,000
2	Repli Allemand	20,000	4,000	8,000	169,000
Janvier-Mars, 1917	Offensive de l'Aisne (Chemin des Dames et Bataille des Monts)	87,000	15,000	7,000	128,000
Avril-Juillet, 1917	Opérations à objectifs limités (Flandres, rive droite de la Mense, la Malmaison)	38,000	9,000	3,000	41,000
Août-Décembre, 1917	Stabilisation	4,000	3,000	9,000	266,000
Janvier-Février, 1918	Campagne défensive de 1918	145,000	13,000	18,000	368,000
Mars-juin, 1918	Campagne offensive de 1918	110,000	35,000	9,000	3,110,000
Juillet-Novembre, 1918		1,528,000 <sup>1</sup>	179,000	121,000	
			Total, 4,938,000 <sup>2</sup>		

<sup>1</sup> Dont: 477,800 prisonniers vivants en pays ennemi ou en Suisse, au Novembre 11, 1918, et 30,000 prisonniers rapatriés ou évadés depuis Juillet, 1916.  
<sup>2</sup> Add. Officers killed 36,000.

GERMAN LOSSES ON THE WESTERN FRONT BY MAIN OPERATION PERIODS.  
(From the *Statistics of the Reichsarchiv*.)

THE GERMAN LOSSES OPPOSITE THE FRANCO-BELGIAN AND BRITISH FRONTS.

Period.	Opposite the Franco-Belgian Front.			Opposite the British Front. <sup>1</sup>			Opposite the Combined Franco-Belgian-British Fronts. <sup>2</sup>		
	Dead. <sup>3</sup>	Missing and Prisoner. <sup>4</sup>	Wounded.	Dead. <sup>3</sup>	Missing and Prisoner. <sup>4</sup>	Wounded.	Dead. <sup>3</sup>	Missing and Prisoner. <sup>4</sup>	Wounded.
August-November, 1914.	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	116,750 <sup>5</sup>	107,640 <sup>5</sup>	453,050 <sup>5</sup>
December, 1914-January, 1915	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	— <sup>5</sup>	54,825 <sup>5</sup>	11,100 <sup>5</sup>	104,100 <sup>5</sup>
February-March, 1915	20,446	9,457	66,079	2,927	4,394	11,169	23,373	13,851	77,248
April-June, 1915	37,020	23,283	130,117	8,233	4,937	29,916	45,253	28,220	160,033
July-August, 1915	13,427	4,805	48,553	2,225	706	8,684	15,652	5,513	57,237
September-November, 1915	24,551	31,164	98,424	6,165	5,363	20,521	30,716	36,527	118,945
December, 1915-January, 1916	5,623	2,312	20,998	2,279	82	8,408	7,902	2,394	29,406
February-June, 1916	46,973	25,316	206,450	10,845	2,531	42,131	57,818	27,847	248,581
July-October, 1916	49,510	72,935	215,566	32,338	36,288	131,332	81,848	103,223	346,988
November-December, 1916	8,455	14,395	33,187	6,135	7,207	22,894	14,580	21,602	56,081
January-March, 1917	5,826	1,241	23,116	6,878	5,226	23,084	12,704	6,467	46,210
April-July, 1917	38,122	48,285	151,903	29,642	40,806	105,323	67,764	89,091	257,226
August-December, 1917	25,728	33,548	108,105	37,630	51,848	147,658	63,358	85,396	255,763
January-February, 1918	2,049	1,441	8,740	2,351	545	8,938	4,400	1,986	17,678
March-June, 1918	41,121	26,424	185,659	73,180	47,049	314,958	114,251	73,473	500,617
July-November, 1918*	45,169	154,313	215,135	33,027	193,554	144,535	78,196	347,867	359,370
							789,400 <sup>7</sup>	968,197	3,088,743

<sup>1</sup> Including the German losses opposite the Portuguese Troops, for a time interpolated in the British line.  
<sup>2</sup> The losses opposite the American front are estimated at about 25,000; there are no data available on which to base an exact figure.\*  
<sup>3</sup> Dead, here only means fallen on the field of battle, and does not include those who died in hospital, etc., from wounds or sickness.  
<sup>4</sup> Taken from the figures reported every ten days to the Supreme Command by the troops. The totals of missing include both men only temporarily absent from their units, and those just reported dead or wounded later.  
<sup>5</sup> For the losses from August, 1914, to January, 1915 (inclusive), only general totals are available, which are partly based on estimates.  
<sup>6</sup> The figures for October, 1918, are not quite complete; and those for November, 1918, are entirely lacking.  
<sup>7</sup> The total of German War Deaths on the Western Front in Table A, viz., 1,493,000, is obtained from these tables as follows. Killed 780,000 (Reichsarchiv) + died in hospital 300,000 (i.e., the same proportion as the French) = missing now believed dead in Reichsarchiv return 194,000 + 215 additional dead in Nachschmitt's final return 170,000 = Estimate of Germans killed by Americans 40,000 = 1,493,000.  
 \* This figure is now stated by the German Reichsarchiv to be incorrect. An unofficial German estimate places the total between 100,000 and 140,000. I have adopted the higher total.—W.S.C.

## LOSSES OF MEN IN THE GERMAN LAND FORCES.

(From Information supplied by the Central Enquiry Office (Zentral Nachweisamt) for War Casualties and War Graves.)

On the Authority of the Official Casualty List.	Dead (Killed in Action and Died of Wounds or Sickness).			Number of Woundings <sup>1</sup> so far as they were not mortal (not number of wounded men).			Prisoner and Missing, not in- cluding those known to have died in captivity (included in col. 2). <sup>2</sup>		
	Other Ranks.		Total.	Other Ranks.		Total.	Other Ranks.		Total.
	Officers.			Officers.			Officers.		
Up to 31.12.14	5,947	138,655	142,502	11,519	529,199	540,718	908	153,682	154,590
" 31.12.15	16,921	611,524	628,445	29,030	1,566,376	1,595,406	3,191	316,963	320,154
" 31.12.16	24,910	938,591	963,501	45,587	2,425,568	2,471,155	6,245	485,012	501,257
" 31.12.17	33,272	1,238,301	1,271,573	61,093	3,117,743	3,178,836	9,659	656,745	666,404
" 31.12.18	46,946	1,574,088	1,621,034	88,898	4,014,931	4,103,819	14,698	846,692	861,390
" 31.12.19	50,555	1,668,053	1,718,608	92,310	4,123,285	4,215,595	18,607	1,061,648	1,080,255
" 31.12.20	52,024	1,711,955	1,763,979	92,358	4,122,221	4,214,579 <sup>3</sup>	18,143	1,047,089	1,065,232
" 30. 9. 21	52,673	1,740,160	1,792,833	92,384	4,122,435	4,214,819	17,985	1,031,436	1,049,421
" 31.10.22	53,229	1,768,693	1,821,922	92,441	4,123,057	4,215,498	18,103	1,019,809	1,037,912
" 30. 6. 23	53,386	1,781,138	1,834,524 <sup>4</sup>	92,458	4,123,315	4,215,773	18,042	1,012,032	1,030,074 <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The number of individuals wounded and the number of wound cases cannot be given separately.<sup>2</sup> The number of wound cases is smaller than before because the number of individuals who were reported as died of wounds was greater than the fresh cases of wounds in the period.<sup>3</sup> The total of those who died in captivity has not been finally settled. Up to the present, 53,066 deaths of German prisoners have been reported by the States with which we were at war. Of these 40,300 are included in the casualty lists, the rest are still left in the total of Prisoner and Missing.<sup>4</sup> It must be assumed that the greater number of the German nationals still missing (170,000) are dead. The total of dead will therefore be increased to approximately 2,000,000.

## APPENDIX K

### ALLY AND GERMAN DREADNOUGHT AND BATTLESHIP STRENGTH, 1917

A TABLE SHOWING HOW TWO SEPARATE DREADNOUGHT FLEETS COULD HAVE BEEN  
FORMED IN 1917, EACH SUPERIOR TO THE TOTAL GERMAN FLEET.

*Dreadnoughts only.*

Allied Bluewater Fleet.	Germany.	Allied Inshore Fleet.
<div> { Malaya . . .  Valiant . . .  Barham . . .  Queen Elizabeth . . .  Warspite . . .  Canada . . .  Erin . . .  Benbow . . .  Emperor of India . . .  Marlborough . . .  Iron Duke . . .  Ajax . . .  Centurion . . .  King George V . . .  Conqueror . . .  Monarch . . .  Thunderer . . .  Orion . . .  Colossus . . .  Hercules . . .  Neptune . . . } 15-in. guns  14-in. guns  13.5 in. guns  12-in. guns </div>	<div> { Baden . . .  Bayern . . .  Kronprinz . . .  Markgraf . . .  Grosser Kurfürst . . .  König . . .  König Albert . . .  Prince Regent Luitpold . . .  Kaiserin . . .  Friedrich der Grosse . . .  Kaiser . . .  Oldenburg . . .  Ostfriesland . . .  Thüringen . . .  Helgoland . . .  Posen . . .  Rheinland . . .  Westfalen . . .  Nassau . . . } 15-in. guns  12-in. guns  11-in. guns </div>	<div> { Royal Sovereign . . .  Royal Oak . . .  Revenge . . .  Resolution . . .  Agincourt . . .  Vanguard . . .  Collingwood . . .  St. Vincent . . .  Superb . . .  Temeraire . . .  Bellerophon . . .  Dreadnought . . .  Lord Nelson . . .  Agamemnon . . . } 15-in. guns  12-in. guns  12-in. and 9.2-in. guns </div>
21.	19.	14.
<i>United States.</i>		<i>United States.</i>
<div> { Arizona . . .  Pennsylvania . . .  Nevada . . .  Oklahoma . . .  North Dakota . . .  Delaware . . . } 14-in. guns </div>		<div> { South Carolina . . .  Michigan . . .  Texas . . .  New York . . .  Wyoming . . .  Arkansas . . .  Utah . . .  Florida . . . } 12-in. guns </div>
6.		8.



DREADNOUGHTS ONLY—*continued.*

Allied Bluewater Fleet.	Germany.	Allied Inshore Fleet.
<i>France.</i> Lorraine . . } 14·2 in. Bretagne . . } guns Provence . . }		<i>France.</i> France . . . } Paris . . . } 12-in. Courbet . . . } guns Jean-Bart . . } Vergniaud . . } 12-in. Mirabeau . . . } and Diderot . . . } 9·4-in. Condorcet . . } guns Voltaire . . . }
3. Total, 30.	Total, 19.	9. Total, 31.

The heavy monitors must be added to the Inshore Fleet, viz., 4 mounting 2—15-inch guns, 4 mounting 2—14-inch guns, 8 mounting 2—12-inch guns; total 16, mounting 32 guns.

To appreciate the gun-power of these fleets, the weight of projectiles of each calibre must be remembered:—

	lb.
A 15-inch gun fires . . . . .	1,950
14-inch „ . . . . .	1,600
13·5 inch „ . . . . .	1,400
12-inch „ . . . . .	800 (German 980)
11-inch „ . . . . .	600
9·2 inch „ . . . . .	380

The relative weight of broadside from the primary guns alone of these three fleets is approximately as follows:—

Allied Bluewater Fleet.	German.	Allied Inshore Fleet.
430,000 lb.	160,000 lb.	220,000 lb.

## APPENDIX L

### THE MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS COUNCIL, 1917-18

#### THE COMPOSITION OF THE MUNITIONS COUNCIL AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF BUSINESS.

##### THE MINISTER.

##### THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

##### THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY.

##### GROUPS OF DEPARTMENTS UNDER MEMBERS OF COUNCIL.

##### F. *Finance*.—Sir HERBERT HAMBLING.

Finance—Munitions Works Board—Controlled Establishments Finance—Munitions Contracts—Lands—Central Stores—Salvage.

##### D. *Design*.—Major-General the Hon. F. R. BINGHAM, C.B.

Design—Inspection—Trench Warfare Design—Munitions Inventions.

##### S. *Steel and Iron*.—JOHN HUNTER, Esq.

Iron and Steel Production—Factory Construction.

##### M. *Materials, etc.*—Sir ERNEST MOIR, Bart.

Non-Ferrous Metals—Scrap Metals—Development of Mineral Resources—Government Rolling Mills—Transport: Railways, Overseas, Trench Warfare—Forwarding and Receiving—Railway Materials—Cranes—Optical Munitions—Potash.

##### X. *Explosives*.—Sir KEITH PRICE.

Explosives Supply—Trench Warfare Chemical Supplies—Mineral Oil Production—Royal Gunpowder Factory, Waltham Abbey.

##### P. *Projectiles, etc.*—Sir JAMES STEVENSON, Bart.

Arca Organization—Gun Ammunition—Gun Ammunition Filling—Trench Warfare Ammunition, filling and supply other than Trench guns and howitzers—Small Arms Ammunition—Munitions Gauges—Central Clearing Bureau—Timber.

##### G. *Guns*.—Sir GLYNN WEST.

Guns and Carriages (Supply and Repair)—Trench Guns and Howitzers—Machine Guns, Revolvers, Pistols, etc.—Rifles, Bayonets, etc.—Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield Lock—Royal Ordnance Factories, Woolwich.

##### E. *Engines*.—Sir ARTHUR DUCKHAM, K.C.B.

Aeronautical Supplies—Petrol Engines Supply—Mechanical Transport—Mechanical Warfare—Agricultural Machinery—Electric Power Supply—Machine Tools—Stampings and Castings.

##### A. *Allies*.—Sir FREDERICK BLACK, K.C.B.

(Temporarily, Sir CHARLES ELLIS, K.C.B.)

##### L. *Labour*.—Sir STEPHENSON KENT, K.C.B.

Labour Regulations—Labour Supply—Housing—Welfare.

##### *Secretariat*.

Council Secretariat—Parliamentary and General—Legal—Requirements and Statistics—Establishment—Special Intelligence—Priority.

Very shortly afterwards an additional group was constituted for Requirements and Statistics, Mr. W. T. Layton being appointed Member of Council "R." In October, 1917, the Master-General of the Ordnance, Major-Gen. Sir W. T. Furse, K.C.B., D.S.O., was invited to become an Honorary Member of Council, representing the War Office.

In February, 1918, the Engines Group was sub-divided, and Sir William Weir became Member of Council "A," in charge of an Air Group. In July, 1918, the remainder of the Engines Group was replaced by the newly organized Warfare Group, including Trench Warfare and Inventions, under Major-Gen. the Rt. Hon. J. E. B. Seely, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P., who was appointed Member of Council "W."

## APPENDIX M

### MUNITIONS MINUTES AND LETTERS.

*To Sir Douglas Haig.*

*July 26, 1917.*

I take this early opportunity of writing to you to tell you how earnestly I shall endeavour to study your wishes and sustain the efforts of the Army by every means which falls within the scope of the Ministry of Munitions. I hope you will rely upon me to do this, and will let me know at once if there is any way in which I can serve you.

There are many difficulties here, both with labour and materials, especially steel, and at this stage of the War it will often become necessary to choose between desirable things and to throw special emphasis on this or on that branch of production.

If you have any suggestions which will improve the *liaison* which should be maintained between certain branches of this Department and the Army you will, I hope, let me know them.

Later on, when I am better informed and you are less busy, it would be a good thing for us to have a talk in order that I may carry out the general directions with regard to supply which I receive from the War Office with a complete and sympathetic understanding of your needs and wishes.

I was tempted to tell you when we met what was in store for me, but I thought on the whole it was better to wait for the *fait accompli*.

### ADMIRALTY STEEL REQUIREMENTS.

*To Lord Curzon.*

*July 26, 1917.*

I send you herewith an early copy of the Memorandum which has been prepared on the Steel question in this Department.

I am sorry that I shall not be able to be with you on Friday afternoon; but I feel I ought to go to Dundee to-night and give personal attention to the contest on Friday and Saturday.

I think you will feel that the position disclosed in the Steel papers is fairly conclusive against the possibility of giving full and immediate effect to the new Admiralty demand. On my return I will make a further effort to overcome the difficulties and see if better proposals can be put forward. But, broadly speaking, I hope you will decide to remit the general question of principle to the further consideration of the War Cabinet having regard to the facts which are now disclosed. It is worth noting by the way that the July import of Ore is now estimated at 550,000 tons, or nearly 200,000 tons drop on the corresponding month of last year.

Do you not think also that the Admiralty use of steel for other purposes than merchant shipbuilding requires to be reviewed: for instance, we started the War with a fairly good supply of ammunition for every class of gun having regard to the character of sea battles. During the three years that have followed, we have been enormously increasing our stocks, and apart from practice ammunition have been firing very little away. In my time the advance was very great, and standing orders were given as to production, which I know Balfour long kept in operation. The reserves now accumulated will be found to be out of all proportion to what would be necessary to sink the German Fleet even under the most unfavourable circumstances. The American Navy has come in, etc., yet you will see that the Admiralty demands for shell steel are increasing month by month.

Again, an important proportion of the steel involved in the enlarged Admiralty demand is no doubt for the construction of destroyers for anti-submarine warfare. Here it is important to ask what kind of destroyer is being built for this purpose. The 1912-13 destroyer, for which I was responsible, lifted six or seven knots on its predecessor, attaining the immense speed of thirty-six or thirty-seven knots without sacrifice either of gun-power or sea-keeping capacity. These boats, which are almost miniature cruisers, were designed to catch and hunt down the best destroyers of the German Navy in their own waters across the broad distances of the North Sea. It is obvious that quite a different class of destroyer, much smaller and more humdrum, is required for submarine hunting far out of reach of all German surface ships. Twenty-five knots for instance with all the economies in money and material that follow from a sacrifice of speed would be quite sufficient for such a purpose. Yet, if I am rightly informed, we continue to reproduce the highest type, although the War object for which it was created has been largely rejected.

It would be easy to add to these examples, but I only mention these two in the hope that this aspect of our Steel expenditure will not be lost sight of when it comes to adjudicating with inevitable severity between the competing claims of various services.

#### MUNITIONS COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

*To Mr. Balfour (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).*

*August 2, 1917.*

During the last few days I have been thinking about the proper organization of our non-diplomatic communications with America, which as you know are being considered in several aspects at the present time.

There seem to me to be three distinct stages:—

- (1) The Inter-Allied Council called for by Mr. McAdoo to settle a united demand on America on the basis of shipping and credit, and to divide up the total agreed upon between the respective Allies. This is already well on the road.
- (2) The organization within each British Department for the detailed formulation of their needs and for the day to day conduct of their business with America. At present a variety of persons communicate through various channels with their Agents and opposite numbers in America. This cannot be a good way of carrying on business, and must lead to gaps, contradictions and overlapping. I am arranging that all communications for America from this Office are collated and despatched by one man with a proper Staff.
- (3) The inter-departmental organization on this side of the business communications with America from the various Departments. This is also *en train*, and I attach the proposals which have been prepared here by my directions in response to the request of the Prime Minister for the creation of what is called an 'American Board.' It is undoubtedly necessary that such co-ordinating machinery should exist, and it ought to be possible to create it and set it in motion without either interfering with the departmental responsibility and initiative, or introducing a new element of delay. You will see that we proposed in the beginning that the 'American Board' should only have copies of the cables which are passing, but that as they get into their stride they should take over the whole business of their despatch.

If this threefold organization is established all our business communications with the United States will pass through one transmission point on this side, and will be received at the same point for distribution to the various Departments. But do you not think that there should also be one transmission point and addressee on the other side? Ought not the Northcliffe Mission to be organized as a regular department, and all communications, for whomsoever intended, be addressed to the Secretary of that department for distribution under the authority of the Head of the Mission to the various Agents and persons affected and for collateral information? I should be quite prepared to place all

our business agents in America directly under Lord Northcliffe in exactly the same way as departmental officers are under a Minister here.

Although this system looks a little cumbrous I do not see how any of the stages can be omitted. A strict routine may here and there cause some inconveniences, but these are not comparable to those which arise when a considerable number of persons push ahead cheerily on their own affairs without knowledge of what others are doing or concert with them.

*The Advisory Committee.*  
*Mr. Hunter.*

August 9, 1917.

Monsieur Thomas, in his interview with me yesterday, informed me that there were no less than 700,000 tons of steel which had been paid for by the French lying stranded for want of shipment in America. Surely the lifting of this steel, whether to France or to this country, should be a first charge on our shipping resources. I presume the ships which carry ore from Northern Spain would not be capable of carrying steel across the Atlantic, but it seems the poorest economy of tonnage, labour and dollars not to transport this vital commodity to Europe. If you are in agreement with this, you should state a strong case for the Shipping Controller and for the information of the Admiralty and the War Cabinet.

It also seems very probable to me that the best plan we could make for the utilization of our resources in the new Programme of 1918 would include the carrying of all this steel to France and Great Britain as one of its fundamental features.

#### RESERVES OF GUNS.

*Secretary: (Mr. Layton—for action.)*  
*Advisory Committee } (For information.)*  
*Sir Glynn West*

August 15, 1917.

Pray consider the following in regard to the reserve of guns:—

In a small army engaged in what is believed to be a short period of intense war, as was our original expeditionary force, a reserve of guns was rightly provided and kept idle on the communications in order to replace gun casualties and losses in batteries. But now that the war is maintained on the front of very large armies only fractions of which are heavily engaged at any given time, and when it is carried on continually year after year as a regular business, no reserve of idle guns is needed. The ultimate gun reserve of the army should be a repairing organization in the highest state of activity and on the greatest scale. The emergency reserve of guns consists in putting a greater strain upon the lives of the existing guns through keeping them in the line for short periods after they should normally be withdrawn. From this it would appear that the reserve of guns to be provided in the programme of 1918 should not be taken as an arbitrary figure like 25 per cent., but should be that figure which is required to flush and feed the repairing organization to its utmost capacity. Let me see calculations worked out on this latter basis. The experience of the present offensive should yield the data and the programme of guns in the field, and their ammunition provided at present for 1918 should give the scale.

#### THE NEW PROGRAMME.

*Secretary:*  
*Advisory Committee on New Programme.*  
*Mr. Layton.*

We must now be asking ourselves the question, 'In what direction are great expansions of our war-making machinery possible in 1918?' Artillery will remain a fairly constant factor, and the steel situation must exercise its limiting power. Ought we not then to look to a gigantic expansion of trench mortars and their organization to a pitch as high as that now attained by our Artillery? Would it not be possible for the trench mortars properly concerted to take the whole trench-pounding business off the hands of the Artillery and leave them free for attacking lines in rear, for counter-battery work and all services of manœuvre? Could we not greatly increase our supply of explosives? Have we not already got large surplus and expansive power in this field? Could we not

use cast-iron carcasses to pass these explosives over to the enemy? I am imagining an expansion in 'short range artillery' ten or even twenty times as great as anything yet witnessed, and the whole organized by telephones, etc., to the same high standard of action as our present artillery. You should look into this field from the point of view of materials available.

Side by side with this 'short range artillery' we must explore the provision of very long range guns, and long range howitzers. I have asked Sir Glynn West to report upon the possibilities of utilizing old naval guns which may be placed at our disposal. There must be at least eighty 12-inch, and perhaps twenty 9·2-inch guns available from ships which have been or will be laid up almost immediately. To make these guns effective for land service, railway mountings or other carriages will be necessary. Which are the best patterns? How long would they take? What would be saved in time by adapting naval guns to land service as against building guns specially? Secondly, assuming there were a saving of time in utilizing existing naval guns, could the ammunition for these guns be got ready so as to make the saving of time effective? Thirdly, what can be done to prolong the life of these guns, (a) by reducing the charges and working out new range tables accordingly; (b) by providing new 'A' tubes? Is it not possible to devise and organize rapid relining plants? Would it not be possible to put a tube like a 'Morris' tube in a 12-inch gun and make it fire a 9-inch or 10-inch shell and to arrange for the rapid replacement of such tubes? This after all is only applying the sub-calibre principle to actual service. We ought not to be prepared to take 'No' for an answer on this question of extending the firing capacity of long range guns. The reason that their lives are short is that the inner tube wears out. That is the difficulty which has to be got over, and is not the obvious solution to have light rapidly replaceable inner tubes? It is for invention to solve this difficulty.

The above is without prejudice to the development of long range 6-inch gun fire.

The development of aeroplanes is now clearly before us as a great expansive feature of the campaign of 1918, and preparations to that end are far advanced. Are we sure they are thoroughly concerted between all departments concerned? Is the bombing programme keeping pace with aeroplane construction and projectile construction? Can our explosive supply stand at once the double increased demand (a) of an enormous trench mortar expansion and (b) of an enormous aerial bombing programme? In my opinion the manufacture of explosives should be pushed to the extreme limit, this being the governing factor. When this governing factor is ascertained it will then become incumbent upon us to find means of delivering the explosives to the enemy, and if the existing methods of distribution do not suffice to get rid of the explosives, new methods of conveying them must be developed. Do not let us be worried about having too much explosives on our hands. There is plenty of storage room behind the German lines.

I will deal with the Tank programme—i.e. mechanical infantry, on separate papers shortly.

The above is only to assist you in your survey of the resources and possibilities, and of course I am very imperfectly informed as to what these may be.

#### THE STRIKE OF THE CUMBERLAND MINERS.

*Mr. Layton.*

*August 23, 1917.*

I want the following facts for my meeting with the Cumberland miners to-morrow:—

50,000 tons of iron ore have been lost in consequence of the fortnight's strike and holidays. This 50,000 tons of ore would have made 50,000 tons of steel. How many ships of the Board of Trade standard pattern could have been made from 50,000 tons of steel? How many tons of wheat could those ships have brought to this country in the year 1918?

Again, during the last few months the German submarines have been devoting every effort to sinking iron ore cargo upon the seas and in the last two, three, or four months they have succeeded in sinking—how many tons?

I believe I am right in supposing that the fortnight's cessation of work on the Cumberland field has inflicted more injury on our shipping and food supply next year than all the efforts of the German submarines have been able to inflict in one, two or three months as the case may be.

Pray have these figures checked for me by to-night.

#### MAN POWER AND MATERIALS.

##### *To the War Cabinet.*

*August 26, 1917.*

The Ministry of Munitions is affected at every step by the treatment of the man-power problem.

The distribution of man power between the different services can only be settled by the War Cabinet. The War Cabinet cannot decide unless they know the effect of any particular distribution on munitions, agriculture, shipbuilding, etc. It would be easy for me, in conjunction with Sir A. C. Geddes, to afford the Cabinet all the necessary data; and after they had decided it would be easy for me to agree with Sir A. C. Geddes upon the best way, or the least injurious way, to carry out the decision.

But to do this it is indispensable that I should only have to deal with one authority. If the man-power question is split up among a variety of Departments out of touch or at variance with each other, and each cutting in on the labour market and on labour sentiment at numerous points, a continuance of the present friction, confusion, and inefficiency is certain. The greatest cause of irritation in the labour world at the present time is, in my opinion, the recruiting muddle. The questions which are arising every day among munition workers can easily be settled between two closely allied Departments. They are insoluble under present conditions.

I trust that in this war emergency a simple clear-cut policy will be followed, viz. that all material should be supplied by one Department and all men by another, and that these two Departments shall work in the closest concert. Every divergence from this, however tempting or persuasively argued, can only weaken our war-making capacity.

#### THE AEROPLANE PROGRAMME.

##### *To the War Cabinet.*

*September 25, 1917.*

1. THERE is no reason to suppose that the immense programme of Aeroplane Construction which has been sanctioned cannot be achieved. The estimates of progress have so far been substantially confirmed by results.

2. The Aeroplane Programme will of course be frustrated if its requirements in skilled labour and materials are not met, as they certainly can be met. Still more is this true, if the claims of the Admiralty or of the War Office involve large withdrawals of skilled labour from munition supplies. If, for instance, Admiralty requirements are to be accorded super-priority or 'Admiralty Priority' without regard either to the effect upon munitions programmes or to the possibilities of internal economies in the Admiralty use of their present appropriation, the obvious consequences will follow. The matter is one entirely for the Cabinet, and any decision they may take can be easily given effect to. It must however be remembered that a decision to give priority to one class of supply is *ipso facto* cancelled by a subsequent decision to give priority to another class of supply. It will be no use complaining afterwards when the inevitable consequences of such decisions mature.

The Zeppelin Programme for the Navy is a case in point.

It is suggested that all Departments engaged in the prosecution of the war should receive an equally searching investigation in order to ascertain the use they are making for effective war purposes of the labour and material at their disposal. It is impossible for any one Department to judge the relative

importance of its own claims. That can only be done by the War Cabinet as a consequence of their General War Plan for 1918, which is not known to individual Departments.

#### MEMORANDUM ON PROTECTION FROM AIR RAIDS.

*October 5, 1917.*

1. I HAVE given directions that dug-outs and shelters are to be immediately provided under approved schemes in the whole of the munition factories in the bombing areas. Many private firms have already taken these measures with great advantage. The labour will be found from the people employed in the factories. The work should not take long. The loss on output must be accepted; it will certainly be much less than the loss caused by the people scattering to their homes whenever an air-raid alarm is given. There will also be a great gain in the feeling of confidence imparted to the workers. I hope these arrangements will be complete within ten days.

2. I consider that generally speaking people are entitled to a safe shelter within reasonable distance of their homes or their work. I consider that in or near each street a house or houses should be prepared affording reasonable security to the residents, and that in the vicinity of all large works, whether munitions or other, an adequate provision should be made for everyone. This of course would vary in each case with the facilities and materials available. I am impressed by the rapidity by which shelters have been provided in some of the munitions areas already, and I do not believe the task will be found a very formidable one. I expect the Germans are already hard at work providing proper shelters in the cities likely to be attacked. It is especially important to the confidence of the population that in working-class areas consisting almost entirely of frail two-storey dwellings there should be sufficient shelters prepared. Where there are larger houses an issue of sand-bags and of leaflets containing clear printed directions as to the parts of the house which are safe, the dangers to be avoided, etc., should meet the case. I do not see why the work should not be done by volunteers working under the local authorities, assisted by the military forces in the country. There are scores of ways of giving efficient protection. There are thousands of officers and others in this country thoroughly acquainted with the methods. As long as people have a safe place to go to when firing begins and are compensated for the damage done to their houses, they will stand a great deal of hammering and get back to their work promptly when it stops. All the defences can be improved gradually.

#### CHEMICAL WARFARE SUPPLIES.

*Secretary.*

*October 16, 1917.*

What are the factors which impose limits on the chemical supply? How much labour—and of what classes—is now engaged in the existing chemical supply? How quickly and to what extent could it be increased? I am anxious to consider the possibility of a supply on the largest possible scale of cast-iron chemical shells to all or almost all natures of guns to be fired with reduced charges so as not to affect the lives of the guns and so to be a definite addition to the offensive power of our artillery. At present we are limited by steel and the lives of guns. If we can devise a type of ammunition which affects the lives of guns to a far less degree than ordinary shell and does not require steel, we shall have entered a new field of expansion, which expansion should only be limited by the labour involved and by the special materials required in chemical manufacture. Both in the case of high explosives and lethal chemicals we must push our production to the maximum and devise methods of conveying it to the enemy. I have derived the impression that we are so far only trifling with chemical warfare, and that we have got to prepare ourselves for action on an entirely different scale. I look to General Thuillier in the first instance to make proposals for very great increases, and it will then be possible to see how far these plans can be reconciled with other needs. Chemical warfare must be one of the three or four leading features of our campaign of 1918.



*Sir William Weir.*

*October 24, 1917.*

A dangerous feature in the last Zeppelin raid has been masked by the disaster which overcame the raiders on their way back. It is clear that the German counted on the height at which the Zeppelins of the newest pattern can now fly as a means of resisting all forms of existing aeroplane attack. Apparently this calculation is at present well founded. If that is so, we ought to find without delay a means of sending aeroplanes up to even greater heights at night. I presume this point is being studied. Evidently they thought they could fly here with safety and certainty at altitudes where they could not be touched. It appears to be very important that experimental work to secure greater height records in aeroplanes should be pressed on.

## APPENDIX N

### WAR MEMORANDA

#### MECHANICAL POWER IN THE OFFENSIVE

MR. MONTAGU having requested me to express my views on the question of the greater application of mechanical power to the prosecution of an offensive on land, I have prepared the following rough notes:—

1. The conditions of this war deny to the stronger power, whether on sea or land, its legitimate offensive scope. In all previous wars the stronger army was able to force matters to a final decision. The great developments of defensive power now prevent this.

2. We shall never have a superiority in numbers sufficient to triumph by itself. At present the fighting forces are much too evenly balanced. We have, perhaps, a superiority of five to four in fighting formations on all fronts, but the enemy's advantage of being on interior lines more than covers this. Even if we have a superiority of six to four, that will be insufficient, and we are not likely to see a greater superiority than this for a very long time.

3. Frontal attacks were abandoned forty years ago on account of the severity of fire. Now that the severity of fire has enormously increased and is constantly increasing, they are forced upon us in the absence of flanks.

4. Two methods of frontal attack have been tried. First, the unlimited, like at Loos and Champagne, where the troops were given a distant objective behind the enemy's lines and told to march on that; and second, the limited form as tried by the Germans at Verdun, and by ourselves and the French on the Somme. Neither produces decisive results. The unlimited simply leads to the troops being brought up against uncut wire and undamaged machine guns. The limited always enables the enemy to move his artillery away, and to sell a very little ground at a heavy price in life, gaining time all the while to construct new defences in the rear. It is true the limited attack has achieved a great deal in wearing down the enemy, but it is a disputed question whether the attacker does not wear himself down more, and certainly it was so in the case of the German attack on Verdun. Nothing in the great operations on the Somme affords any promise of finality or of a definite decision.

5. We must, therefore, either find another theatre or another method.

6. Leaving out the strategic question of other theatres and looking solely to method, it is clear that to achieve decisive results we must be able to make an advance in one bound of 7,000 or 8,000 yards, thus capturing the whole line of the enemy's guns. If this were done from two converging points on the well-known pincer principle, the enemy in front of our attack and in between both attacks would equally be destroyed, and an irreparable gap opened.

7. Therefore the problem is to advance a large army in one bound 7,000 or 8,000 yards. Is that problem insoluble? Let us see first of all exactly what it is that stops us.

8. An attack depends on two processes—

(a) Blasting power and

(b) Moving power;

blasting power is very well provided for in the constantly improving supplies of guns and shells, but moving power is in its infancy.

9. Two things stop the offensive movement of armies—

(a) Bullets and fragments of shell which destroy the motive power of men, and

(b) The confusion of the conflict.

10. Bullets would be much less well directed at night, but on the other hand confusion would be much greater.

11. If there were any means therefore by which confusion at night could be overcome, it would be a gigantic advantage. Under present conditions movement at night is almost impossible. The labyrinths of trenches, wire, craters, and natural accidents of ground impose insuperable obstacles to the movement of large forces. Everybody loses his way, and everything miscarries.

Yet it is at night that the offensive would have, if it could only act, all the advantages. It knows what it wants to do. The defensive has to wait on it, and cannot move, even when it knows, until daylight comes. Therefore if there were an army able to develop the faculty of being able to carry out a sustained, concerted, continuous attack on the greatest scale, with the utmost precision and lack of confusion, throughout the dark hours, that army would have an inestimable advantage. It would move directly and surely to its goal; and morning would reveal an arrangement of forces arising wholly out of the pre-conceived decisions of the attackers.

12. If to this advantage you can add a comparative immunity from bullets and fragments, you are a long way on the road to decisive victory.

13. Here note that the object of fire is to scatter as many small missiles as possible. If steel protection against these small missiles can be afforded, the enemy is thrown back on the direct hit of a shell. By day it has been proved this is extremely rare on a moving target. By night it is practically impossible. A moderate multiplication of targets will baffle the direct hit. Darkness will prevent it except as a pure fluke.

14. If it should be found that the self-same methods which enable you to overcome the difficulties of confusion at night also impart this comparative immunity from missiles, we should be in presence of a military fact of the first order.

15. Such a method exists. It may be shortly described as 'the attack by armoured vehicles.' I cannot pretend to do more than outline it and suggest it. I am not an inventor or designer. I have no means of testing and elaborating these ideas. Evidently they require study, experiment, and at least six months' preparation.

But now is the time in the winter to organize and perfect this method of attack. The 'Tanks' have shown the way. But they are only a beginning.

A hiatus exists between inventors who know what they could invent, if they only knew what was wanted, and the soldiers who know, or ought to know, what they want, and would ask for it if they only knew how much science could do for them. You have never really bridged that gap yet.

Parenthetically, let me point out the need of establishing without delay an Anti-Tank Committee to study the methods by which tanks can be defeated. This body should work in the closest harmony with those concerned in the production and design of tanks, each striving to defeat the other, exchanging information and perfecting their methods. It is not to be supposed that the Germans will not develop tanks in their turn. We have the enormous advantage of being able to experiment on ourselves with them, and to find out the best ways by which they may be defeated. We ought to have a complete anti-tank outfit by the spring. This is only what the Admiralty did before the war in keeping continually at work submarine and anti-submarine committees.

16. Subject to what I have said of the tentative and suggestive character of these observations, I will try to indicate the kind of attack I have in mind.

Broken ground, which forbids movement of bodies of troops by night, is passable to armoured vehicles.

If you look at the films lately exhibited you see that men moving over the broken or pock-marked ground, now rising on the crest of a crater, now descending into its trough, seem as much out of their element as a man overboard in a rough sea, while a tank forges along like a ship. You must master the physical difficulties of this broken terrain. You don't expect to accomplish your blasting process with human hands. You use several thousand guns and several million shells. Why should you suppose the moving process can be achieved simply through the agency of human legs? You must use the proper machinery in both cases.

Observe, the obstacles remain a constant, but the size and power of the machine to overcome them is capable of considerable expansion.

17. The passage of suitable machines will roll paths or grooves, smooth and

flat, across the terrain. Everyone will be able to follow them. In fact, by night they cannot do anything else. Instead of labyrinths of trenches and unknown terrain, you will have a pattern of smooth rectilinear tracks, cut more or less deeply into the surface and traversing trenches, etc. These tracks will supersede or superimpose themselves upon all other communications and accidents of ground during the night. The deeper they can be cut or squashed down the better. Along these smooth, unmistakable tracks movement will be possible for the attackers.

Observe, incidentally, that the enemy's guns will be laid on the old communication trenches and regular night lines. They will not fire on these new tracks except by chance. Anyhow, it is proved artillery barrages alone will not stop good troops.

18. It will be possible to direct the movement of these track-making machines with accuracy and certitude. A good helmsman steering on a compass bearing will make the exact point required surely and punctually, and the assaulting infantry and all their appurtenances can follow, and *can only follow*, where he has led.

(I omit details like shaded lights of various colours pointing backward along each path; every brigade its own particular series of coloured lights.)

19. Not only is the advance in a straight line possible; any portion of the attack can be turned to any fresh direction simply by the helmsman altering course according to chart and plan.

Therefore you can make your great plans with the utmost detail beforehand, and can be sure of having ten hours of darkness in which you will be able to unfold them stage by stage; while the enemy cannot make any important movement until morning, and can only fire his artillery on fixed points which you are mainly avoiding, and before dawn you will have been able with certainty to place your troops and their necessary supplies wherever you have designed.

This then is the foundation:—

The advance of a large number of track-making machines and the stamping through this agency of a pattern upon the ground which will guide and govern the development of the attack.

20. But there are a great number of details and accessories with which I am ill-equipped to deal. Please therefore take my numbers only as tokens.

Let us assume two converging pincer attacks, each on a 15,000 yard front with (say) an equal distance in between.

Assume ten divisions for each attack with five more in reserve.

Total assaulting divisions = 30.

Brigades attack on 500 yard frontages. Each brigade requires a track of its own.

10 by 3 = 30 tracks in each attack.

Two machines to each track (in case of accidents).

Total 60.

Two attacks = 120.

Add 30 for margin = 150 trackmakers.

(Note.—A trackmaker may also be a fighting-machine of a very powerful character.)

Minimum rate of advance—1 to 2 miles per hour.

21. Cover and clear the advance of the trackmakers by 300 fighting-tanks in each attack.

Total 600.

Two trackmakers and five tanks line ahead on each track, five tanks manœuvring in the intervals.

\*On every alternative track one armoured trench-cutter for lateral communication and consolidation purposes.

\*On every other track one tramway-laying or duckboard-laying mechanical unit. These last follow the assaulting infantry.

22. Formation of assaulting infantry.

First and second waves of assaulting infantry advance sheltered by the Tanks and trackmakers, and guided accurately by them, probably in platoon columns of fours, with shield-carriers at the head and on the flanks.

Note.—Infantry should carry nothing but rifles, grenades, cartridges, food, water, and steel protection. They approach shielded but fight naked. The

shield, which must be small and partial, leads you at once to the phalanx. A number of men, each partially protected by metal, will reciprocally protect each other.

All this must be ascertained by experiment, and may break down under experiment.

Every infantry battalion will have *two caterpillar tenders*: Total, 240 in each attack; 480 in the whole.

These are lightly protected motor-lorries mounted on caterpillars. They follow along the tracks and carry everything the infantry requires—grenades, ammunition, smoke apparatus, food, etc.

### 23. Caterpillar batteries—

Twenty-five 4 gun 18-pr. batteries in each attack; 200 vehicles total.  
Fifty heavy gun caterpillar trailers.

### 24. Total armoured vehicles—

Trackmakers	.	.	.	.	.	150
Fighting tanks	.	.	.	.	.	600
Trench cutters	.	.	.	.	.	50
Caterpillar tenders	.	.	.	.	.	480
Caterpillar artillery (light and heavy)	.	.	.	.	.	250
Total	.	.	.	.	.	<u>1,530</u>

25. The foregoing must be taken as a mere sketch. The central conception is that a successful attack of this kind must be viewed as a whole, and all the different kinds of tools and tackle required made in concert like an outfit or a plant: everything should be foreseen and fitted into a general plan, like the large volume which contains a battleship design. It is not a case of merely building a lot of things on the chance that they will be useful, but of assembling the exact tools that you require for a particular, well-understood, mechanical job.

26. Don't familiarize the enemy by degrees with these methods of attack. Apply them when all is ready on the largest possible scale, and with the price-less advantage of surprise.

W. S. C.

November 9, 1916.

### PARAGRAPHS OF MY MEMORANDUM OF OCTOBER 21, 1917, OMITTED FROM TEXT.

#### II.<sup>1</sup>

8. During the Somme offensive the British artillery fired an average of 26,000 tons of shell a week. During the twenty-two weeks of the present offensive the average has been 47,000. If the programmes on which we are now working are executed, the average weight of shell per week available during the whole of the 1918 offensive should rise to approximately 66,000 tons. Both the guns and ammunition on that scale are being provided. This figure however constitutes our maximum. The magnitude of the effort should not be underrated. Steel is the limiting factor, and, having regard to increased shipbuilding demands and declining tonnage of imported ore, no further expansion can be expected. . . .

9. On the other hand, we have not yet reached the limits of our High Explosive supply. Many of our factories have been working short time, and others are almost closed down. Our capacity for manufacturing High Explosives considerably exceeds our present means of discharging it upon the enemy through the agency of steel guns and shells. If therefore we are to realize our full potentiality, we should develop other additional methods of discharging High Explosive upon the enemy.

10. Two methods readily suggest themselves. The first is by aeroplane bomb. This will be dealt with in its place. But the second, and far the most important

<sup>1</sup> For paragraphs 1-7 of this Memorandum, see p. 1179.

method, can be found in an extensive development of trench mortars. This would be possible, within limits which are being accurately ascertained, without making inroads upon our limited supplies of steel, or competing seriously with other important supplies. Thus a new and additional method of making war on the enemy would be created.

11. In order that this proposition may be fairly judged, it is necessary to consider it in its true tactical relation. Trench mortars have not hitherto played an important part in our operations. Except in the opening stages of a great offensive, it has been found impossible to use them. Once the ground has been torn up by the bombardment and the troops have advanced on to the battlefield, it is not physically possible to carry up into close proximity to the firing-line the masses of ammunition which they require, especially when the enemy is firing ceaselessly upon the communications with his concentrated artillery. On the main battle-front therefore, or on ground where the rival artilleries are concentrated, trench mortars are relegated to a subsidiary part.

12. But none of these difficulties hamper the employment of trench mortars on a scale many times greater than has yet been practised, provided they are used not on the main battlefield but on other and quieter parts of the front. One or more sectors of the front, each fifteen or twenty miles long, can be chosen in advance and loaded up with large stores of trench-mortar ammunition which can be carried up during quiet periods for those sectors and safely stored without imposing undue labour on the troops holding the line, and without—and this is the important point—revealing any trace to the aeroplane photograph. The mortars themselves are very easy to make and to establish, and owing to their extreme rapidity of fire the numbers required are not excessive. The manufacture of the mortars and of the ammunition sufficient for a series of very considerable operations could be prepared without encroaching upon our steel or sensibly affecting artillery or other programmes. In this way the Ministry of Munitions would be able to utilize the full limit of their explosive capacity, and the trench-mortar armament would come as a clear addition to the offensive power of the army.

13. The range of the mortar is already more than 1,000 and will it is believed soon be raised to about 1,500 yards. Even greater ranges are confidently hoped for. Thus if 40 to 50 miles of our Front were systematically prepared with this trench-mortar installation, it would be possible during the culminating period, and at the true psychological moment in relation to the main battle, to pulverize and rip away the whole of the enemy's first system of trenches simultaneously or successively over very considerable stretches of the Front. On these quiet sectors of the Front the enemy has few troops and no concentration of artillery. It is possible even that because he is weak he maintains in the first system a larger proportion of such troops as he has on the ground than is now his habit on the actual battle-front. Such troops as he has there are resting and recovering from the ordeal of the main battle. The well-recognized symptoms which indicate the preparation of an offensive, viz., the massing of guns, the development of railways, the digging of assembly trenches, &c., would all be lacking. The priceless element of surprise might therefore be secured. No great superiority of infantry would be required to yield the moderate and limited results which are to be expected from this subsidiary method of attack. On the other hand, the bombardment on a great scale by trench mortars firing heavy bombs is certainly not less formidable so far as the range allows than even the most severe artillery attacks. If it is thought worth while to cultivate this addition to our offensive power, estimates will be furnished by the Ministry of Munitions showing the full scale on which trench mortars and ammunition could be provided. It would, however, be indispensable to the efficient execution of any of these schemes that the trench-mortar service should be organized as a special branch, and that it should receive its due proportion of the best officers and men.

14. We have in fact to contemplate the simultaneous or successive concerted fighting of two different kinds of battles involving in their aggregate all the practicable portions of the front. There is the main battle or battle of Exhaustion, and the subsidiary battle or battle of Surprise. They mutually aid each other, and it might well be that the results of the battle of Exhaustion would be reaped on the battlefield of Surprise. The battle of exhaustion is

appropriate to ground which the enemy cannot afford to give up, of which he has to contest every yard. The battles of surprise are appropriate to the less strategically significant portions of the front. The battle of exhaustion should proceed as at present by regular steps from the earliest period of the campaigning season until the culminating period is reached. The battles of surprise should then be successively released until the whole front, now at one point now at another, is involved. The methods of the battles of surprise should be wholly different from those of the battle of exhaustion. The material required should as far as possible not compete with the needs of the main battle. Above all the preparation should not reveal the conventional symptoms of an offensive to a hostile aeroplane photograph. It is believed that both these conditions can be satisfied.

### III.

15. There are other means besides trench mortars for delivering the battle or battles of Surprise. The original conception of the Tanks was to use them (a) by night, (b) by surprise, (c) as a novelty, (d) as an independent arm, (e) in an operation specially planned for them under the most favourable weather conditions, and (f) on ground not torn up by artillery. The comparatively small numbers that have been so far available, the imperfections of their design, the urgent needs of the army, have led to an almost complete reversal of all these conditions. Tanks have been condemned to wallow in twos and threes in broad daylight in the most astounding crater fields, confronted by the enemy's massed artillery, and where every special preparation has been made to receive them. Even so they have played their part. But the resources of next year will for the first time make available numbers of Tanks with trained personnel, sufficient not only to act as auxiliaries to the infantry in the main battle, but to provide the forces necessary for attacks of their own under the most favourable conditions and on a very large scale. While the existing pattern of Tanks will be available in considerable numbers to support the main operations of the army during the spring and early summer, it should be possible by July to provide an ample force of a greatly improved pattern, lighter, faster, and with far greater radius of action. It will not be necessary, as with the present types, to bring these Tanks up in close proximity to the battlefield some days before the attack. They can be held back along an arc 15 to 20 miles from the centre of attack, and concentrated for battle by complete surprise. There is no need to elaborate these possibilities. At present, however, only 18,000 men are assigned for the Tank Corps. This imposes severe limitations on this method of multiplying infantry men.

16. The third factor which could be made to play its part in the battles of Surprise is Railway Artillery. The French have made a very great development of this, using for the purpose all kinds of long-range guns, old and modern, taken from their Navy and their fortresses, and mounted on many kinds of carriages, from the most complex to the most primitive. The total number of guns of all kinds employed by the French in this special service amounts to not fewer than 1,100, and next year it is contemplated to raise the number to 1,800. Approximately two-thirds of these guns fire from railway mountings, and the rest are moved by tractors. The method in contemplation is to construct in four or five or even more selected sectors of the front the necessary sidings from which the railway guns can be brought into action. Thus, even if the enemy notices these preparations beforehand, he has no means of knowing at any given moment which of the four or five points of attack is going to be used. He could be further mystified by a camouflage preparation of additional points of attack. It should thus be possible to secure for the heavy artillery, or at least an important portion of it, that mobility from one part of the front to another which is essential to surprise. The French general who commands this service<sup>1</sup> ('*Artillerie lourde à grande puissance*') states that with good arrangements, well thought out and prepared during the winter, it should be possible to bring into action in a single night 300 or 400 powerful long-range guns in a sector where previously the enemy had no reason to expect an attack.

<sup>1</sup> General Buat.

17. The relation of this method to the other factors available for Surprise battles is obvious. If preparations were begun now and continued throughout the winter, the British Front might be equipped not only with trench-mortar installations covering wide sectors, but also with the railway facilities and railway artillery necessary to enable a heavy artillery to intervene in battles of Surprise at several alternative or successive points of attack. The possibilities so far as materials are concerned are being thoroughly examined in the Ministry of Munitions. Simplified forms of mountings of various kinds, including a new 'semi-mobile' pattern, are being designed. If, as we have been led to believe, the manning requirements of the Navy for their new programme for anti-submarine craft of all kinds should necessitate during next year the laying up of large numbers of older battleships, it is possible that a considerable supply of guns might be obtained from this source. Many of our fortresses at home and abroad also contain guns which are not likely to be required and could now be safely spared for a more urgent service. It ought to be possible without an undue strain on either our labour or material to develop by next summer a very considerable force of mobile and semi-mobile (*i.e.*, requiring a concrete bed) heavy artillery together with a series of 'jumping-off grounds' from which it could act as required.

18. Thus our front might during the winter be systematically prepared both with the properly protected stores of trench-mortar ammunition and the railway facilities for the long-range artillery which would enable the Commander-in-Chief to move powerful trench-mortar and heavy artillery organizations from sector to sector with great rapidity and ease and open up a series of Surprise battles all along the front at the psychological moment of, or in the necessary interludes between, the great attacks on the main battlefield. There are of course many other factors in connection with the swift movement of troops laterally or from points in rear to particular sectors of attack; but these fall outside the scope of a paper written solely from the point of view of munitions. It may, however, be mentioned that a very large reserve of mechanical transport manufactured for Russia, but not now required for that purpose, is available and idle.

If, however, our Army next year found itself endowed with the power at four or five different points (*a*) to pulverize the enemy's front system up to a depth of 1,500 yards with trench mortars, and (*b*) simultaneously to bring a greatly superior heavy long-range artillery into action both by complete surprise and at periods accurately related to the main operation, it would possess the means of sensibly extending the scope and enhancing the intensity of its offensive action.

#### IV.

19. Most important of all the mechanical factors which are available, comes the Air Offensive. So much progress in thought has been made on this subject, even since this paper was under preparation, that it is not necessary to dwell upon it at any length. But there are certain general principles which may be stated or re-stated.

War proceeds by slaughter and manœuvre. Manœuvre consists either in operations of Surprise or in operations against the flanks and communications of the enemy. Owing to the lines now stretching continuously from the Alps to the sea, there are no flanks. But the Germans, striking under the sea at our vital communications, have threatened us with a decisive peril, which we are warding off only by an immense diversion of our resources. If we take on the one hand the amount of national life-energy which the Germans have put into their submarine attack, and compare it with the amount of national life-energy we are compelled to devote to meeting and overcoming that attack, it will be apparent what a fearfully profitable operation this attack on our communications has been to the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Would it be an exaggeration to say that for one war-power unit Germany has applied to the submarine attack we have been forced to assign fifteen or twenty?

Even better than an operation against communications is an operation against bases. Air predominance affords the possibility of striking at both. It can either paralyse the enemy's military action, or compel him to devote to the

<sup>1</sup> This referred of course to the material sphere, and took no account of other reactions.



defence of his bases and communications a share of his straitened resources far greater than what we need in the attack.

20. All attacks on communications or bases should have their relation to the main battle. It is not reasonable to speak of an air offensive as if it were going to finish the war by itself. It is improbable that any terrorization of the civil population which could be achieved by air attack would compel the Government of a great nation to surrender. Familiarity with bombardment, a good system of dug-outs or shelters, a strong control by police and military authorities, should be sufficient to preserve the national fighting power unimpaired. In our own case we have seen the combative spirit of the people roused, and not quelled, by the German air raids. Nothing that we have learned of the capacity of the German population to endure suffering justifies us in assuming that they could be cowed into submission by such methods, or indeed that they would not be rendered more desperately resolved by them. Therefore our air offensive should consistently be directed at striking at the bases and communications upon whose structure the fighting power of the enemy's armies and his fleets of the sea and of the air depends. Any injury which comes to the civil population from this process of attack must be regarded as incidental and inevitable.

21. The supreme and direct object of an air offensive is to deprive the German armies on the Western Front of their capacity for resistance. It must therefore be applied and reach its maximum development in proper relation to the main battles both of Exhaustion and Surprise during the culminating period of our general offensive. German armies whose communications were continually impeded and interrupted and whose bases were unceasingly harried might still, in spite of all that could be done from the air, be able to maintain themselves in the field and keep the front. But if at the same time that this great difficulty and menace to their services in rear had reached its maximum, they were also subjected to the intense strain of a great offensive on the ground proceeding by battles both of Exhaustion and Surprise, the complete defeat and breaking up of their armies in the West as a whole might not perhaps be beyond the bounds of possibility. There is an immense difference between merely keeping an army fed and supplied on a comparatively quiescent front in spite of air attacks, and resisting the kind of offensive which the British are delivering at the present time. It is imperative that the defending army should be able to move hundreds of thousands of tons of stores and ammunition within very limited times to the battle-front, and to maintain a most rapid circulation of hundreds of thousands of troops; and the double strain of doing this under a really overwhelming air attack might well prove fatal. More especially might this be hoped for if the form of our offensive were not confined simply to the main battle-front, but if it were so varied in locality and direction as to require from the enemy *an exceptional degree of lateral mobility*. For our air offensive to attain its full effect, it is necessary that our ground offensive should be of a character to throw the greatest possible strain upon the enemy's communications.

22. We have greatly suffered and are still suffering in the progress of our means of air warfare from the absence of a proper General Staff studying the possibilities of air warfare, not merely as an ancillary service to the special operations of the Army or the Navy, but also as an independent arm co-operating in the general plan. Material developments must necessarily be misguided so long as they do not relate to a definite War Plan for the Air, which again is combined with the general War Plan.

23. In consequence of this, many very important points are still in doubt or in dispute on which systematized Staff study could have by now given clear pronouncements. The dominating and immediate interests of the army and the navy have overlaid air warfare, and prevented many promising lines of investigation from being pursued with the necessary science and authority. Extreme diversities of opinion prevail as to the degree of effectiveness which can be expected from aerial attack. It is disputed whether air attack can ever really shatter communications, bases, or aerodromes. It is contended that aerodromes are difficult to discover and still more difficult to hit; that tons of bombs have been discharged on particular aerodromes without denying their use to the enemy; that railway junctions and communications have been repeatedly bombed without preventing appreciably the immense and continuous movement of men and material necessary to the fighting armies; that no bombardment from the air, especially at great

distances from our own lines, can compare in intensity with the kind of bombardment from artillery, in spite of which, nevertheless, operations of a military and even semi-military character are continuously carried on.

On the other hand, it is claimed that aerial warfare has never yet been practised except in miniature; that bombing in particular has never been studied as a science; that the hitting of objectives from great heights by day or night is worthy of as intense a volume of scientific study as, for instance, is brought to bear upon perfecting the gunnery of the Fleet; that much of the unfavourable data accumulated showing the comparative ineffectiveness of bombing consists of results of unscientific action—for instance, dropping bombs singly without proper sighting apparatus or specially trained 'bomb droppers' (the equivalent of 'gun layers'), instead of dropping them in regulated salvos by specially trained men, so as to 'straddle' the targets properly. It is believed by the sanguine school that a very high degree of accuracy, similar to that which has been attained at sea under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, could be achieved if something like the same scientific knowledge and intense determination were brought to bear.

Secondly, it is pointed out that an air offensive has never been considered on the same scale or with the same ruthlessness in regard to losses for adequate objects as prevail in the operations of armies. Aeroplanes have never been used to attack vital objectives in the same spirit as infantry have been used, viz., regardless of loss, the attack being repeated again and again until the objective is secured. It is pointed out that in 1918 numbers will for the first time become available for operations, not merely on the larger scale, but of a totally different character.

24. On the assumption that these more sanguine views are justly founded, the primary objective of our air forces becomes plainly apparent, viz., the air bases of the enemy and the consequent destruction of his air fighting forces. All other objectives, however tempting, however necessary it may be to make provision for attacking some of them, must be regarded as subordinate to this primary purpose. If for instance our numerical superiority in the air were sufficient at a certain period next year to enable us in the space of two or three weeks to locate and destroy by bomb and fire, either from a great height or if necessary from quite low down, all or nearly all the enemy's hangars, and make unusable all or nearly all his landing grounds and starting grounds within 50 or 60 miles of his front line, his air forces might be definitely beaten, and once beaten could be kept beaten.

Once this result was achieved and real mastery of the air obtained, all sorts of enterprises which are now not possible would become easy. All kinds of aeroplanes which it is not now possible to use on the fighting fronts could come into play. Considerable parties of soldiers could be conveyed by air to the neighbourhood of bridges or other important points, and, having overwhelmed the local guard, could from the ground effect a regular and permanent demolition. The destruction of particular important factories could also be achieved by carefully organized expeditions of this kind. 'Flying columns' (literally) of this character could be organized to operate far and wide in the enemy's territory, thus forcing him to disperse in an indefinite defensive good troops urgently needed at the front. All his camps, depots, &c., could be made the object of constant organized machine-gun attack from low-flying squadrons. But the indispensable preliminary to all results in the air, as in every other sphere of war, is to defeat the armed forces of the enemy.

27. It was therefore proposed in November last year that every infantry battalion engaged in an offensive should be provided with two caterpillar tenders<sup>1</sup> which would undoubtedly carry over the battlefield during the day of battle, and the night following, all the supplies necessary for the immediate continued action of the infantry. The Army have now asked us since July of this year for 450 of these supply tanks by the 1st March, 1918. A serious delay in meeting this requirement is now inevitable, but that it can be met, and met on a very large scale, during the course of next year is certain. A satisfactory universal carrying-machine has been designed and will be reproduced as rapidly as possible. This machine will carry over the 'cratered' battlefield 10 tons, which by making certain fittings can either be expressed in guns, men, ammunition,

<sup>1</sup> Otherwise 'Supply Tanks.'

or supplies. Other methods of utilizing the existing tanks to draw sledges of supplies are also being developed.

28. Another method which is now being pursued promisingly, and may be found to be capable of application on a very large scale, is 'rope railways' or 'cableways.' Various systems of this have recently been experimented with and constructed by the army and by the Ministry of Munitions, working simultaneously and independently. This work has now been combined, and it may be found possible within a reasonable time to support the forward movement of an army by a network of cableways, which will grow up as fast as the troops can move across the battlefield, and can with sufficient loss and effort be maintained in working order during the battle and in the night following.

The relative merits of the 'caterpillar tender' or 'supply tank' compared to the cableway have yet to be determined. It seems not at all improbable that both will be needed, and that the supply of the fighting infantry in the most advanced positions could be maintained by the caterpillars, while the supply of the advancing batteries would be secured by the cableways.

## APPENDIX O

### TANK MINUTES

#### TANK REQUIREMENTS.

*Mr Layton.*

*August 3, 1917.*

Let me have on a single sheet of paper the following broad facts about the Tank programme, actual and prospective. How many Tanks, and of what patterns, are to be ready month by month for the next 12 months? By whom, and to what extent, have these programmes been approved? How much steel do they require? How much do they cost? How much labour skilled and unskilled do they require in these twelve months? What are the principal limiting factors in material and class of labour? Apart from the number of Tanks, what quantity of spares, and what maintenance plant are required? Give the money value or weights of materials or proportion of labour required, whichever of the three is the most convenient and representative. Let me know the number of people in the Tank Department, the principal salaries paid, and the aggregate of salaries paid per annum. Show particularly any part of Tank production which overlaps aeroplane production, i.e., any transferable margin, whether of skilled mechanics or of ball bearings, etc., in which these two branches of production are clashing competitors. Show also the proportion of steel, of money, and of skilled and unskilled labour proposed to be absorbed in Tank production in these twelve months compared with the general Budget of the Ministry. I shall be quite content if many of these figures are approximate only.

#### SPECIAL TANKS.

*Secretary.*

*E.*

*September 9, 1917.*

It ought to be possible to make a Tank which could easily traverse the kind of inundations that are found on the Flanders Front. It appears to me likely that no alterations in the structure of the Tank would be required. All that would be necessary would be to make the belts which carry the track run round a rather larger circumference, and to utilize this increased circumference to obtain (a) height to the extent of about 4 feet, and (b) length as far as may be necessary to provide for unseen submerged ditches and cavities in the ground. In other words, it would be like putting a bogie under a Tank and making the moving track run round the bogie as well as the Tank.

An amphibious Tank is no substitute for this. It may have its place in some other tactical scheme, but it does not meet this particular need. Please therefore concentrate on the definite problem of fitting an under-body to existing Tanks which will enable them to cross the shallow inundations which protect the enemy on considerable and important sectors of the Front. Inundations are supposed to be most effective from 18 inches to 2 feet deep, but as a matter of fact on the Flanders Front they very often run to 3 and even 4 feet, and of course there are holes and ditches underneath. The irregularities of the ground cannot however compare with those which exist on any of the battle-fronts, and I am confident that this is a problem that can not only be easily but swiftly solved.

If this note does not convey a clear impression to your mind, pray consult me. I wish the subject to be examined and plans and drawings to be made as quickly as possible with a resolute intention to solve the problem.

March 16, 1918.

(1) A serious effort must be made to face the question of the frustration of tanks by means of land mines and buried shells. We are making very large commitments in regard to tanks, and you must exercise foresight and vigilance to make sure that our efforts are not wasted. I have always anticipated that this method might be used, as would be seen from a study of a paper I wrote on this subject in December, 1915. At the same time I feel fairly confident that the means exist, or can be discovered, of overcoming this method of resisting tanks. Just as there is a parry to every thrust so there is a feint to every parry; and if we grapple boldly with this problem now I believe we shall overcome the misgivings lately excited in military minds, and also cope with the real danger should it manifest itself.

(2) Let it first of all be observed that this danger to tanks does not affect their use in defensive war for counter-attack, because then they will be operating over ground which the enemy has not had time to sow with mines. Therefore, so far as the defensive aspects of the present campaign are concerned, the position is not affected.

(3) The only way to deal with these difficulties is by experiment. First of all, experiments should be made with land mines and buried shells to see what are the best possible ways of destroying tanks. Obviously what is required is a fuse arrangement which will respond to a slow heavy pressure distributed over a considerable area and will if possible resist a violent blow. A shell with a sensitive fuse into which is fitted a broad metal framework or trellis-work would seem to be indicated. The fuse could be arranged to stand all ordinary weights, but only to explode when the weights approximating to a tank or very heavy wagon were put upon it.

(4) What kind of shell is required? Can you trust simply to the explosion to damage a structure like a tank, or must you strike the tank not merely with the force of the explosion but with large pieces of metal which will break or bend or burr the links and underpart of the tank? If the latter should prove to be true, the mere burying of trench mortar bombs would seem to be ruled out and the difficulty of the problem sensibly increased. What weight of shell would be required? The explosion of a 12-inch shell would no doubt shatter a tank, but nobody could afford to sow the whole front with 12-inch shells. What would be the effect of a 9.2-inch shell? Is it certain that it would destroy a tank? Even sowing the front with 9.2-inch shells would be an extraordinarily difficult and costly business. The 6-inch shell would be a much more manageable proposition from the point of view of the defence, but would it be big enough? These points have got to be established, first of all by expert opinion, and secondly by actual experiment.

(5) It must be remembered that whereas the Mark IV tank can only operate effectively on fairly limited areas on the front, the Mark VIII, on which we are counting for 1919, can go almost anywhere, and the statement often made that 'there are only a few sectors of the front where tanks can be used' will not apply next year. On the contrary, part of the effectiveness of tanks in 1919 will be the surprise due to their appearing in all sorts of country hitherto judged inaccessible to them. We shall see them crossing canals by the lock-gates, making their way across the most heavily shell-crumped areas, traversing intersected and wooded country, climbing steep hills, crossing all manner of trenches, &c. The problem of stopping them by land mines will therefore be enormously extended, and to be safe, the whole front would have to be sown. Some calculations on this point should be made—on what would be involved in this for shells, trench mortar bombs or explosives. A single line of shells would clearly not be effective unless one were sown every tank breadth. They would probably have to be dotted chequer-wise in two or three rows. Even so, once the locality of a minefield had been established by one tank being blown up, it is likely that the way through it would be revealed. It is almost inconceivable that the front should be completely defended by this elaborate and delicate device, or that having been sown they would not get out of order. In fact, it is a plan much easier to talk of than to execute. Let it however be elaborated by officers who believe in it and are trying to put the argument for it at its very highest and give it the best possible chance of being effective.

(6) We then cross over to the other side of the argument—How can the tank

circumvent a minefield? We may disregard the possibility of the whole front being defended by large land mines. The demands on explosive would be far beyond what could be spared. But buried shells or trench mortar bombs are clearly the danger we must try to meet. It is necessary to establish at the outset the effect upon a Mark IV tank of a 6-inch shell buried at the right distance below the surface. I presume it would be buried at least 2 feet. This should be actually tried, and the effect upon the track links and underpart carefully noted.

(7) There are, then, two methods of overcoming the difficulties which suggest themselves: first, exploding the shells before the tank reaches them. This might be done in various ways; firstly, a tank might be equipped with a large steel hammer extending a considerable distance in front of it, say 20 feet, and when reaching a mine area it could strike the ground heavy blows sufficient to spring off the shell; secondly, our artillery could bombard any mine area once it had been located. This would probably spring all the mines in the neighbourhood and enable other tanks to get through safely; thirdly, could not the tank gun if sufficiently depressed test the suspicious ground in front of the tank by firing upon it? I do not know what pressures could be exerted by any of these agencies, or whether they are pressures to which a special fuse could be made insensible on account of their violence while at the same time it would respond to mere weight.

(8) Another method might consist in making a special tank—a proportion of which would be supplied to each [tank] battalion—which would be strong enough by reason of the armouring of its under-portion to resist the explosions and thus clear away a minefield. Or again, an ordinary tank might push a heavy roller, or series of rollers, in front of it, or might carry them in a kind of tray from which they would be allowed to drop on the ground in front of the tank when the known limits of the minefield are reached. . . . Or again, a vehicle might be designed which a tank could tow along with it, which, actuated by wires from the tank, could move ahead and by this way explode minefields.

(9) The above crude ideas are only intended to excite the scientific mind and lead to the production of definite solutions. Two Committees should be formed without delay—one from [the] Trench Warfare and the other from [the] Mechanical Warfare [Department]—who should study the attack of tanks by mines and the counter-measures against mines. They should acquaint each other with the fruits of their reflections and meet together to arrive at joint solutions. Materials and labour must be supplied to enable adequate experiments to be made at once. The closest liaison should be kept with the Army. Much has been, and is being, done on the British front now to guard against the possible tank attacks. Let us have all this knowledge. Again, Bermicourt<sup>1</sup> must have many ideas how to overcome the mining difficulties.

(10) Pray let me have, in the first instance, more definite proposals for setting these inquiries and experiments on foot.

W. S. C.

<sup>1</sup> The Tank Corps Headquarters in France.



# INDEX

		A	Page	Page
<i>Aboukir</i> ... ..	277-9			5: 37
Cruiser. Launched 1900. Displacement 12,000 tons. Speed 21½ knots. Two 9.2 in., twelve 6 in. guns.				224-5
Abrolhos, coaling base ... ..	366			199
<i>Acasta</i> class ... ..	106			Light cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 3,440 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Ten 4 in. guns.
<i>Acheron</i> class ... ..	106			Anglo-French Agreement of 1904 11, 12, 18, 30.
Actæon Net ... ..	726, 731			Anglo-French military conversations authorized by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ... .. 19, 21
<i>Active</i> ... ..	108			Anglo-Persian Oil Convention, 102, 104, 137
Light cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 3,440 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Ten 4 in. guns.				Anthoine, General ... .. 1359
Addison, Dr. ... ..	1174			Antwerp 273, 280-326, 330, 338, 340
<i>Admiral Farragut</i> ... ..	781-2, 789			<i>Aquitania</i> ... .. 780, 830, 857
Admirals and Generals in Action ... ..	569			Arbuthnot, Sir Robert, engages the <i>Wiesbaden</i> ... .. 1041-3
Admiralty, Board of ... ..	193-7			<i>Ardent</i> ... .. 1059
—Transport Department ... ..	328-30			<i>Arethusa</i> ... .. 111, 261, 564
Aerenthal, Count ... ..	22			Light cruiser. Launched 1913. Displacement 3,500 tons. Speed 29 knots. Two 6 in., six 4 in. guns.
Aerial attack and defence ... ..	168, 267-70			<i>Ariadne</i> ... .. 262, 578
Aeroplane Programme ... ..	1438			German light cruiser. Launched 1900. Displacement 2,618 tons. Speed 22 knots. Ten 4.1 in. guns.
Aeroplanes ... ..	264-70, 1196			<i>Ark Royal</i> ... .. 545, 551, 640
Agadir Crisis ... ..	28-49			Armies, losses. See Casualties.
<i>Agamemnon</i> , 171, 539, 542, 553, 587, 612, 625, 639, 640, 644, 744-6, 919.				Armistice ... .. 1397
Battleship. Launched 1906. Displacement 16,500 tons. Speed 18½ knots. Four 12 in., ten 9.2 in. guns.				—terms ... .. 1399
<i>Agincourt</i> ... ..	578, 586			Armour ... .. 522
Air raids ... ..	1439			Armour belt on British battleships, 1065-8
Airships ... ..	265-6			Armoured cars ... .. 270-1, 508, 513
Aitken, Sir Max. See Beaverbrook, Lord.				Army mobilized ... .. 178, 187-213
Albert, King 316, 333, 335, 494-5, 1390				<i>Arno</i> ... .. 871
<i>Albion</i> , 245, 368, 385, 399, 541, 611, 623, 639, 644.				Artillery ... .. 1381
Battleship. Launched 1898. Displacement 12,950 tons. Speed 18 knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in. guns.				<i>Asama</i> ... .. 384, 386-7
Alenson, Colonel d' ... ..	1152, 1162			Japanese cruiser. Launched 1898. Displacement 9,885 tons. Speed 22 knots. Four 8 in., fourteen 6 in. guns.
Alexciuff ... ..	1005, 1101, 1119			<i>Askold</i> ... .. 248-9, 254-5, 386, 451-2
Algeciras Conference ... ..	18-20			Russian light cruiser. Launched 1900. Displacement 5,905 tons. Speed 23 knots. Twelve 6 in. guns.
<i>Algertine</i> ... ..	250			Aspinall, General ... .. 627, 869-71
Canadian sloop. Launched 1895. Displacement 1,050 tons. Speed 13 knots. Six 4 in. guns.				Asquith, H. H. (Lord Oxford and Asquith), 17, 20, 21, 49, 74, 436, 511, 525, 556-7, 589-92, 649, 797-8, 805, 815, 823, 857, 884-5, 897, 912, 1130, 1132, 1136-42, 1290.
Allanson, Colonel Cecil ... ..	866			—on Dogger Bank Action ... .. 571
Allen, Captain ... ..	394			
Allenby, Lord ... ..	1207, 1209-11, 1221			
Allied commanders, conference ... ..	1363			

Vol. I, pages 1-718; Vol. II, pages 719-1433.



- |   | Page                      |   | Page                        |
|---|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Asquith, H. H.— <i>cont.</i>                            |                           | <i>Barham</i> ...                                     | 105, 1024, 1032, 1043, 1044 |
| —invites Mr. Churchill to Admiralty                     | 49                        | Dreadnought battleship. Launched                      |                             |
| —and Northcliffe Press ...                              | 1135-7                    | 1914. Displacement 27,500 tons.                       |                             |
| —orders Fisher to return to duty ...                    | 792                       | Speed 25 knots. Eight 15 in.,                         |                             |
| —relations with Churchill ...                           | 804                       | twelve 6 in. guns.                                    |                             |
| —resigns ...  | 1140                      | <i>Bartolomé, see</i> De Baitolomé, Comma-            |                             |
| Aston, General ...                                      | 263, 273, 313             | dore.   |                             |
| <i>Astræa</i> ...                                       | 385                       | <i>Baruch, Bernard M.</i> , 1337, 1338, 1339, 1351    |                             |
| Light cruiser. Launched 1893. Dis-                      |                           | Battle crises ...                                     | 953-73                      |
| placement 4,360 tons. Speed 19½                         |                           | Bauer, Colonel ...                                    | 243                         |
| knots. Two 6 in., eight 4.7 in.                         |                           | Bax-Ironside, Sir II. ...                             | 740                         |
| guns.   |                           | Bayly, Admiral Sir Lewis,                             |                             |
| <i>Attack</i> ...                                       | 570                       | 120, 481-4, 495, 814                                  |                             |
| Attack the strong or the weak? ...                      | 975-6                     | <i>Beaconsfield</i> ...                               | 3-4                         |
| <i>Attentive</i> ...                                    | 322, 333                  | Beatty, Earl, and submarine alarm, 349-51;            |                             |
| Scout. Launched 1904. Displace-                         |                           | also 64-6, 120, 261, 349, 361, 399, 419-20,           |                             |
| ment 2,670 tons. Speed 25 knots.                        |                           | 423, 426-8, 555, 559-75, 739, 814, 927,               |                             |
| Nine 4 in. guns.  |                           | 1012-69.  |                             |
| <i>Audacious</i> ...                                    | 338, 355-6, 361, 411, 578 | <i>Beauvais Agreement</i> ...                         | 1292, 1356                  |
| Dreadnought battleship. Launched                        |                           | <i>Beaverbrook, Lord</i> ...                          | 1139                        |
| 1912. Displacement 23,000 tons.                         |                           | <i>Belfort</i> ...                                    | 986                         |
| Speed 21 knots. Ten 13.5 in., six-                      |                           | <i>Belgium: Neutrality</i> ...                        | 177                         |
| teen 4 in. guns.  |                           | <i>Bellerophon</i> ...                                | 170                         |
| <i>Augagneur, M.</i> ...                                | 584                       | Dreadnought battleship. Launched                      |                             |
| <i>Aurora</i> ...                                       | 564                       | 1907. Displacement 18,600 tons.                       |                             |
| <i>Australia</i> , 198, 248, 249-50, 252-5, 383, 385-6, |                           | Speed 21 knots. Ten 12 in., six-                      |                             |
| 579, 580, 586, 739.                                     |                           | teen 4 in. guns.                                      |                             |
| Australian battle-cruiser. Launched                     |                           | <i>Belridge</i> ...                                   | 735                         |
| 1911. Displacement 18,800 tons.                         |                           | <i>Benbow</i> ...                                     | 384, 578, 586               |
| Speed 25 knots. Eight 12 in., six-                      |                           | Dreadnought battleship. Launched                      |                             |
| teen 4 in. guns.  |                           | 1913. Displacement 25,000 tons.                       |                             |
| <i>Australian Navy: First fight</i> ...                 | 389                       | Speed 21 knots. Ten 13.5 in.,                         |                             |
| <i>Australian and New Zealand Army</i>                  |                           | twelve 6 in. guns.                                    |                             |
| <i>Corps</i> ...  | 757-8                     | <i>Beresford, Lord Charles</i> ...                    | 53-4, 55                    |
| <i>See also</i> Dardanelles.                            |                           | <i>Bertie, Sir Francis</i> ...                        | 307                         |
| <i>Austria</i> , ultimatum to Serbia, 21-2, 155, 209    |                           | <i>Berwick</i> ...                                    | 385                         |
| <i>Austria-Hungary</i> sues for peace ...               | 1398                      | Cruiser. Launched 1902. Displace-                     |                             |
| <i>Austrian losses in Brusiloff's advance</i> 1011      |                           | ment 9,800 tons. Speed 23 knots.                      |                             |
|   |                           | Fourteen 6 in. guns.                                  |                             |
|   |                           | <i>Bethlehem Steel Company</i> ...                    | 410                         |
|   |                           | <i>Bethmann-Hollweg</i> ...                           | 27, 72, 77, 1117            |
|   |                           | <i>Bieberstein, Marshal von</i> ...                   | 435, 530                    |
|   |                           | <i>Birch, General</i> ...                             | 1279, 1306                  |
|   |                           | <i>Bircham Indicator Nets</i> ...                     | 730                         |
|   |                           | <i>Birdwood, General</i> , 606, 609, 616, 646, 654,   |                             |
|   |                           | 662, 759, 859, 860-2, 912, 922, 1344.                 |                             |
|   |                           | <i>Birkenhead, Lord</i> ...                           | 174, 1084                   |
|   |                           | <i>Birmingham</i> ...                                 | 427-8                       |
|   |                           | Light cruiser. Launched 1912. Dis-                    |                             |
|   |                           | placement 5,440 tons. Speed 25½                       |                             |
|   |                           | knots. Nine 6 in. guns.                               |                             |
|   |                           | <i>Bismarck, Prince</i> ...                           | 5-7, 158                    |
|   |                           | <i>Black, Sir Frederick</i> ...                       | 104                         |
|   |                           | <i>Black Prince</i> , 203, 246, 385, 399, 450, 578-9, |                             |
|   |                           | 1059.   |                             |
|   |                           | Cruiser. Launched 1904. Displace-                     |                             |
|   |                           | ment 13,550 tons. Speed 23½ knots.                    |                             |
|   |                           | Six 9.2 in., ten 6 in. guns.                          |                             |

- |  | Page                   |  | Page          |
|--|------------------------|--|---------------|
| Black Sea ... ..   | 475                    | British Navy: Assembly at Portland, 1912, 91-3; German submarine alarm, 342-63; in 1914-15, 412; leaves for Scapa Flow, 171-2; mobilized, July, 1914, 153; mobilized, July 31-August 4, 173-85; visits Kronstadt and Kiel, 150-1; <i>see</i> under names of ships, and <i>passim</i> . | 1091-2        |
| Blake, Wm. ... ..  | 363                    | British ultimatum to Germany ... ..  | 178-86        |
| <i>Blanche</i> ... ..  | 354                    | Brodie, Commander ... ..   | 846           |
| Light cruiser. Launched 1909. Displacement 3,350 tons. Speed 25 knots. Ten 4 in. guns.               |                        | <i>Broke</i> ... ..  | 1059          |
| <i>Blenheim</i> ... ..   | 580                    | Brooke, Rupert ... ..  | (note) 461    |
| 'Blimps' ... ..  | 266                    | Broqueville, M. de. ... ..   | 309-10, 313-4 |
| Bliss, General ... ..  | 1334, 1336             | Brunsbüttel Lock-Gates ... ..  | 479           |
| Blockade ... ..  | 734-6, 987             | Brusiloff, General ... ..  | 983, 1009-10  |
| <i>Blonde</i> ... ..   | 106-8, 110             | Bryant, Captain F. C. ... ..   | (note) 237    |
| Light cruiser. Launched 1910. Displacement 3,350 tons. Speed 25 knots. Ten 4 in. guns.               |                        | Buat, General ... ..   | 1359          |
| <i>Blücher</i> 564, 565, 567-8, 570-1, 575, 586  |                        | Buchanan, Sir George ... ..  | 528, 584, 617 |
| Board of Admiralty ... ..  | 193-6                  | Budget of 1909 ... ..  | 15            |
| Boedicker, Admiral ... ..  | 1041                   | <i>Bulair</i> ... ..   | 676           |
| Boer War ... ..  | 9                      | Bulgaria 473, 475, 527, 618, 676, 852-3, 976-7. <i>See</i> also Balkan States.   |               |
| Bombing ... ..   | 499-500                | —sues for peace ... ..   | 1396          |
| Bookings, Robert S. ... ..   | 1337                   | —surrender of ... ..   | 982           |
| Boraston, Colonel J. H., his <i>Sir Douglas Haig's Command</i> , 956-7, 1072, 1077, 1087             |                        | Bulkeley-Johnson, Colonel ... ..   | 235           |
| Borden, Sir Robert ... ..  | 138, 142               | Buller, Captain ... ..   | 239           |
| Border Regiment ... ..   | 757                    | Buller, Sir Redvers ... ..   | 868           |
| Borkum ... 481-2, 485-6, 534, 576, 588   |                        | Bülów, General von ... 229, 287, 289-96  |               |
| Bosnia ... ..  | 21-2                   | Bülów, Prince ... ..   | 18            |
| Botha, General ... ..  | 237, 383, 452          | Burma Oil Companies ... ..   | 104, 254      |
| Boué de Lapeyrère, Admiral ... ..  | 179                    | Burney, Admiral ... ..   | 397, 738      |
| <i>Bouvet</i> ... ..   | 611, 638-9, 641, 643-5 | Burns, John ... ..   | 17            |
| Rowles, Thomas Gibson ... ..   | 279                    | <i>Bustard</i> ... ..  | 334           |
| Boyle, Commander ... ..  | 724, 847, 848          | Gunboat. Launched 1871. Displacement 254 tons. One 6 in., one 4.7 in. gun.   |               |
| Bradford, Admiral ... ..   | 560                    | Buxton, Noel ... ..  | 441           |
| <i>Braemar Castle</i> ... ..   | 656                    | Byng, General, 313, 526, 875, 912, 1218, 1282, 1287  |               |
| Braithwaite, General ... ..  | 655, 660               |  |               |
| Brand, Mr. ... ..  | 1337                   |  |               |
| Bratiano, M. ... ..  | 977                    |  |               |
| <i>Breslau</i> ... 438, 441, 445-6, 449, 453, 603  |                        |  |               |
| German light cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 4,500 tons. Speed 27 knots. Twelve 4.1 in. guns.   |                        |  |               |
| Briand, M. 943-4, 981, 1005, 1148-9, 1160  |                        |  |               |
| Bridgeman, Sir Francis 61-2, 66, 90, 99  |                        |  |               |
| Bridges, Colonel 320, 331, 334, 340, 494   |                        |  |               |
| Briggs, Admiral ... ..   | 61, 108                |  |               |
| <i>Brilliant</i> ... ..  | 337, 800               |  |               |
| Light cruiser. Launched 1891. Displacement 3,600 tons. Speed 19½ knots. Two 6 in., six 4.7 in. guns. |                        |  |               |
| <i>Bristol</i> ... 369, 371, 385, 390, 393, 395  |                        |  |               |
| Light cruiser. Launched 1910. Displacement 4,800 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Two 6 in., ten 4 in. guns.   |                        |  |               |
| British Army Casualties. <i>See</i> Casualties.  |                        |  |               |
| British Expeditionary Force ... 189, 209-13  |                        |  |               |

	Page		Page
Callwell, General ...	443, 487, 842, 869	Castor ...	409
Cambon, M. ...	175, 177, 742	Light cruiser. Launched 1915. Dis-	
Cambrai ...	1216-21	placement 3,750 tons. Speed 29	
<i>Cambria</i> ...	409	knots. Five 6 in. guns.	
Light cruiser. Launched 1915. Dis-		Casualties 950-73, 1077, 1085-7, 1427-30	
placement 3,750 tons. Speed 29		and <i>passim</i>	
knots. Five 6 in. guns.		Caterpillars. See Tanks.	
Campbell, Captain Gordon ...	1226-8	Cattaro ...	544
Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry, authorizes		Cawdor, Lord ...	55
Anglo-French military conversations,		<i>Cawdor Castle</i> ...	656
19-20; supports France at Algeciras, 19;		Chamberlain, Joseph ...	9, 16
dies, 20.		Champagne, Battle of ...	958, 977
Canadian Army ...	258-9	<i>Champion</i> ...	410
<i>Canopus</i> , 245, 365-77, 379, 381-2, 384-5,		Light cruiser. Launched 1914. Dis-	
387-8, 390, 393, 395, 541, 542, 624-5,		placement 3,750 tons. Speed 29	
639, 745.		knots. Two 6 in., eight 4 in. guns.	
Battleship. Launched 1897. Dis-		Channel Ports ...	327-41, 1308-11
placement 12,950 tons. Speed 18½		<i>Charlemagne</i> ...	611, 639, 641, 644
knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in.		Charles, Archduke ...	151
guns.		Charleton ...	572
<i>Canterbury</i> ...	409, 1041	Chatfield, Captain ...	1029
Light cruiser. Launched 1915. Dis-		<i>Chatham</i> ...	246, 782, 789, 871
placement 3,750 tons. Speed 29		Light cruiser. Launched 1911.	
knots. Five 6 in. guns.		Displacement 5,400 tons. Speed	
<i>Cap Trafalgar</i> ...	239	25½ knots. Eight 6 in. guns.	
German armed merchant cruiser.		Chemical warfare supplies ...	1439
Caporetto disaster ...	1213-4	Chemin des Dames ...	1318-21
Capper, General ...	313	<i>Chester</i> ...	1041
Caprivi, Count ...	7	<i>Chikuma</i> ...	249-50, 253-5, 385
Carden, Admiral, illness of, 635-6; plan for		Japanese light cruiser. Launched	
Dardanelles attack, 534-6; also 446, 449,		1911. Displacement 4,950 tons.	
450, 532-53, 578-9, 590, 595, 602, 604,		Speed 26 knots. Eight 6 in. guns.	
606, 614, 623, 625, 628-9, 631, 633-5, 740		Chinese Labour cry ...	15, 18
<i>Carmania</i> ...	239	Churchill, Major John ...	810
Armed merchant cruiser.		Churchill, Lord Randolph ...	142
Carmen Sylva ...	978	Churchill, Winston Spencer—	
<i>Carnarvon</i> 368-9, 371, 383, 385-7, 390, 393,		—President of Board of Trade ...	21
395, 407.		—Under Secretary of State for the	
Cruiser. Launched 1903. Displace-		Colonies ...	21, and <i>passim</i>
ment 10,850 tons. Speed 22½ knots.		—safeguards naval cordite ...	35
Four 7.5 in., six 6 in. guns.		—authorises examination of letters	
Carol, King ...	977-80	of spies ...	36
<i>Caroline</i> ...	578-80	—attends Committee of Imperial	
Carp, M. ...	977	Defence ...	39-42
Carson, Lord, 149-50, 174, 899, 1132,		—talk with Count Metternich ...	37-8
1138-40, 1170.		—'Military Aspects of the Con-	
<i>Carysfort</i> ...	410	tinental Problem,' 1911 ...	42-6
Light cruiser. Launched 1914. Dis-		—Agadir crisis, 1911, letter to Sir	
placement 3,750 tons. Speed 29		E. Grey ...	46-7
knots. Two 6 in., eight 4 in. guns.		—goes to Admiralty ...	49
Cassel, Sir Ernest ...	72, 74-5, 84-5, 144	—sends for Lord Fisher ...	56
Castelnau, General de 231, 290, 939, 998,		—proposes Naval War Staff ...	60-2
1001, 1004, 1149.		—speech at Belfast ...	75
—made Major-General at head-		—letter to Sir E. Cassel on German	
quarters ...	945	Navy Law ...	85
		—letter to Lord Fisher on liquid	
		fuel problem ...	103

	Page		Page
Churchill, Winston Spencer— <i>cont.</i>		Churchill, Winston Spencer— <i>cont.</i>	
—letter to Sir E. Carson on Irish affairs ... ..	149	—minute on battle-cruisers in the Forth ... ..	555
—and Herr Ballin ... ..	158-9	—to Asquith on position of an Admiral and General ... ..	556-7
—sends 'warning telegrams' to Commanders-in-Chief ... ..	166-7	—to Jellicoe, suggestion moving Scapa Flow to Firth of Forth ...	571-3
—air defence of Great Britain ...	273	—to Fisher on strength of Grand Fleet ... ..	578-9
— <i>Aboukir, Hogue and Cressy</i> ...	277-9	—on naval policy ... ..	585-8
—at Antwerp ... ..	309-23	—to Kitchener on his mission to Sir John French ... ..	600-1
—letters to Sir John French		—on general situation ... ..	607-8
338, and <i>passim</i>		—on Dardanelles ... ..	608
—attacks on ... ..	357	—to Kitchener on Dardanelles ...	608-9
—letter to Prince Louis on his resigning office ... ..	359-60	—to Kitchener on military aid for Dardanelles ... ..	614-6
—studies military position in Europe	36-7	—to Grey on Dardanelles ... ..	622
—signs order resulting in Battle of Falklands ... ..	390-1	—to Asquith on Hamilton at Lemnos ... ..	626
—to Grand Duke Nicholas on Baltic	479	—to De Robeck on succeeding Carden ... ..	636
—to Fisher on mining ... ..	483	—to De Robeck ... ..	649-53
—to Asquith on general situation ...	484	—to Fisher on De Robeck ... ..	667-8
—to Kitchener on transports ... ..	487	—to Fisher on sinking of merchant ships by submarines ... ..	721
—practical propositions ... ..	489	—speech on sinking of merchant ships by submarines ... ..	725-6
—to Kitchener on loss of <i>Formidable</i> ... ..	496	—on submarine menace ... ..	726-30
—to French on Sea Coast Plan	494, 496-7	—to Cabinet on Blockade ... ..	734
—to Cabinet on Zeppelin menace ...	500	—to Fisher on Dardanelles ... ..	745, 778-9
—to Fisher on aerial defence ... ..	501	—to Heads of Departments in Admiralty ... ..	780
—to Asquith on army ... ..	502-4	—to Director of Transport ... ..	780
—to French on army ... ..	504-6	—on Dardanelles ... ..	787-9
—orders howitzers ... ..	506	—to De Robeck on <i>Queen Elizabeth</i> ...	783
—to French on Sea Coast Plan ... ..	507	—to Asquith on Fisher's Dardanelles statement ... ..	786-7
—to Asquith on smoke, tanks and shields ... ..	510-11	—to Fisher on his resignation	793-4, 795-6
—to Asquith, reporting Action of the Dogger Bank ... ..	570-1	—to Jellicoe on The Day ... ..	800
—orders tanks on his own responsibility ... ..	514	—to Asquith on leaving the Admiralty ... ..	801
—on tanks ... ..	514	—to Asquith, advising Sir H. Jackson as First Sea Lord ...	807
—to Lord Dundonald on his grandfather's war secret ... ..	517, 519-20	—offered Chancellorship of Duchy of Lancaster ... ..	807
—to French on smoke experiments	521	—to De Robeck on smoke question	808-9
—on variants of the offensive ... ..	522-6	—to Major Churchill on Fisher's resignation ... ..	810
—to Asquith on Dardanelles ... ..	527	—to Haldane on press campaign ...	810
—to Carden on Dardanelles ... ..	532	—to Major Churchill on accepting Chancellorship of Duchy of Lancaster ... ..	810
—to Carden ... ..	533, 543	—to Major Churchill on Dardanelles	810-1
—asks for plans to be worked out by Staff for forcing of Dardanelles ... ..	541-2	—to Balfour on Dardanelles ... ..	811-2
—to Asquith on Adriatic ... ..	544		
—on forcing of Dardanelles ... ..	545-6		
—on reserves of ammunition ... ..	546-7		
—to Grand Duke Nicholas on Dardanelles ... ..	550-1		
—on Dardanelles ... ..	551-2		
—to Kitchener on Dardanelles ... ..	552		
—Criticism of writer of Australian Official History ... ..	553		

	Page		Page
Churchill, Winston Spencer— <i>cont.</i>		Churchill, Winston Spencer— <i>cont.</i>	
—leaves Admiralty ...	811-14	—to Lloyd George on offensive ...	1208-9
—on the general situation ...	816-23	—to Lloyd George and Lord Derby on the Italian disaster ...	1215-6
—member of Dardanelles Committee ...	823	—institutes the convoy system for troopships ...	1233
—for War Committee ...	826-8	—to Sir Edward Carson on convoy system ...	1235-7
—for Kitchener on Dardanelles reinforcements ...	829-30	—on man-power and the situation, ...	1251-6
—on the general military situation ...	831-8	—speech at Bedford ...	1256-7
—General appreciation and forecast ...	850-4	—Munitions Programme for 1919, ...	1265-74
—to Hamilton on reinforcements ...	855	—on replacement of losses in guns, etc. ...	1293-4
—protests against offensive on Western Front ...	885-6	—appeal to munition workers to give up their Easter holidays ...	1296
—on Dardanelles ...	889-91	—to Lord Haig on Lys battle ...	1305
—on Stokes gun ...	891-2	—to Mr. Dudley Docker on supply of tanks ...	1306
—to Balfour on renewal of naval attack at Dardanelles ...	895-6	—on certain hypothetical contingencies ...	1308
—on Dardanelles ...	900-3	—Note on the War ...	1325-32
—to Cabinet, predicting Austro-German advance against Serbia ...	903-4	—America and shipping, minute on, ...	1334
—on Dardanelles evacuation ...	904-6	—to Mr. Baruch on nitrates, etc., ...	1338-9
—on arrival of German poisonous gas installation at Dardanelles ...	906	—on supplies to the United States armies, report ...	1340
—excluded from War Council ...	912	—on replacement of material used by American Army ...	1341
—resigns from Government ...	915-6	—on strike at Coventry ...	1343
—on deadlock in the West ...	956	—to General Harrington on Mechanical Battle ...	1345
—article written on Verdun ...	994, 1003	—Munitions and the Limits of Recruiting ...	1347-51
—to Asquith on British naval superiority ...	1019	—Munitions Policy for 1919... ..	1375-81
—to Lord Jellicoe on British naval superiority ...	1019	—Munitions Minutes and Letters, ...	1434-40
—on naval strategy ...	1064	—on mechanical power in the offensive ...	1441-44
—Memorandum on Battle of the Somme ...	1084-9	—Tank Minutes ...	1451-3
—speech in House of Commons, on submarine menace ...	1113-4	—and <i>passim</i> .	
—Report on compulsory service ...	1129-30	Clamping Committee ...	1202-3
—and Lord Northcliffe ...	1141	Clemenceau, M., 982, 1149, 1259, 1292, 1316, 1322, 1335.	
—opens debate at Secret Session, May 10, 1917 ...	1142-4	<i>Cleopatra</i> ...	410
—Minister of Munitions ...	1170	Light cruiser, Launched 1914. Displacement 3,750 tons. Speed 29 knots. Two 6 in., eight 4 in. guns.	
—'The Greater Application of Mechanical Power in the Prosecution of an Offensive on Land' ...	1178-9, 1141-50.	<i>Clio</i> ...	249, 451
—Munitions Programme for 1918, ...	1179-84	Sloop. Launched 1903. Displacement 1,070 tons. Speed 13 knots. Six 4 in. guns.	
—Duplication and Waste of Effort, ...	1187-9	Coalition Government, 617-8, 798, 804-5, 1128-46.	
—Munitions Budget for 1918, 1189, 1192-8		Cochrane, Admiral. See Dundonald, Thomas, 10th Earl.	
—to Chancellor of the Exchequer on shipping and food supply ...	1199-1200	Cochrane, Commander ...	848-9
—to Sir Joseph Maclay on cut of iron-ore imports ...	1200-1	<i>Colossus</i> ...	1060
—to M. Loucheur on proposed cut in steel exports to France ...	1201-2	Colville, Admiral ...	352
—to Clamping Committee ...	1202	'Commence hostilities' against Germany ...	186
—to War Cabinet on steel supply, etc. ...	1203-4		

	Page
<i>Condé</i> ... ..	385
French cruiser. Launched 1902.	
Displacement 9,856 tons. Speed	
21 knots. Two 7·6 in., eight	
6·4 in., six 3·9 in. guns.	
<i>Conqueror</i> ... ..	554
<i>Conquest</i> ... ..	410
Light cruiser. Launched 1914. Dis-	
placement 3,750 tons. Speed 29	
knots. Two 6 in., eight 4 in. guns.	
Conscription Bill passed ... ..	1132
Constantine, King, 440, 447-8, 453, 600,	
620-1, 894-5, 925, 981.	
Constantinople and Russia ... ..	617-8
Convoy System, 244-7, 250, 254-9, 1233-8	
Corbett, Su Julian ... ..	69 ( <i>note</i> )
Corda: <i>La Guerre Mondiale</i> quoted,	
993, 1086	
<i>Cordelia</i> ... ..	580
Cordite ... ..	35, 743 ( <i>note</i> )
<i>Cormoran</i> ... ..	249
German armed merchant cruiser.	
<i>Cornwall</i> 369, 371, 383-4, 385-7, 390,	
393-5, 782.	
Cruiser. Launched 1902. Displace-	
ment 9,800 tons. Speed 23 knots.	
Fourteen 6 in. guns.	
<i>Cornwallis</i> ... ..	611-2, 623-5, 639
Coronel and the Falklands ... ..	364-95
<i>Courageous</i> ... ..	412
Cruiser. Launched 1916. Displace-	
ment 18,600 tons. Speed 32 knots.	
Four 15 in., eighteen 4 in. guns.	
Coutanceau, General ... ..	992, 1002
Coventry, strike at ... ..	1342-4
Coventry Ordnance Works ... ..	508, 748
Cowans, Sir John ... ..	597
Cox, General ... ..	875, 909
Cradock, Admiral ... ..	365-79, 382, 406
Crease, Captain ... ..	746
<i>Crescent</i> ... ..	580
<i>Cressy</i> ... ..	277-9
Cruiser. Launched 1899. Displace-	
ment 12,000 tons. Speed 21½ knots.	
Two 9·2 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
Crewc, Lord ... ..	140, 175, 823
Cromarty ... ..	121
<i>Cumberland</i> ... ..	385, 578
Cruiser. Launched 1902. Displace-	
ment 9,800 tons. Speed 23 knots.	
Fourteen 6 in. guns.	
Cunliffe, Lord ... ..	104
Curzon, Lord ... ..	823, 1130
Custance, Sir Reginald ... ..	120, 1016
Cuxhaven: attack by seaplanes ... ..	403-4
Czernin, Count ... ..	978-80

## D

	Page
<i>Daily Chronicle</i> ... ..	142
<i>Daily Mail</i> ... ..	1136
D'Alençon, Colonel. See Alençon.	
Dallas, Colonel, 303, 306, 308-9, 311, 318	
Dallolio, General ... ..	1215
D'Amade, General ... ..	637
'Danger Year' ... ..	23-4
<i>Danzig</i> ... ..	812
Dardanelles, abandonment, 900-16; battle	
of the Beaches, 750-65; Dardanelles	
Commission, 538; Dardanelles Com-	
mittee, 823-5; Defences of, 670-676; Fall	
of the Outer Forts, 611-14; Suvla Bay,	
858-77: also 475, 486-8, 513, 527, 528-32.	
534, 584, 589, 611-783, 858-916, 947-8,	
976, 983-4.	
<i>Dartmouth</i> ... ..	247, 383, 385-6
Light cruiser. Launched 1911. Dis-	
placement 5,250 tons. Speed 25½	
knots. Eight 6 in. guns.	
Davies, General ... ..	859, 912, 922
Dawney, Hugh ... ..	235
De Bartolomé, Commodore, 61, 362, 384,	
400, 546, 557, 633, 648-9, 653, 746.	
De Robeck, Admiral, and Wemyss, 635-7,	
928; attack at Narrows, etc., 644, 661-4,	
772-3; change of plans, 657-60; leaves	
Dardanelles. 918; on position in Galli-	
poli, 772-3; proposes to resume offen-	
sive, 667; succeeds Carden, 635-7; also	
385, 543, 552, 612, 642-3, 645-9, 656-7,	
688, 737, 741, 744, 746, 763, 768, 772,	
782, 808-9, 829, 895-6, 910-11, 913, 921,	
927, 1223.	
Debeny, General ... ..	1322
Decoy ships ... ..	730-1, 733
Deedes, William ... ..	628
<i>Defence</i> , 203, 247, 366, 369, 371-5, 374,	
383, 385-8, 390, 395, 406, 578, 1040-1,	
1043	
Cruiser. Launched 1907. Displace-	
ment 14,600 tons. Speed 22½ knots.	
Four 9·2 in., ten 7·5 in. guns.	
Dégouttes, General ... ..	1390
Degrise, General ... ..	309, 319-20
Delclassé, M. ... ..	12, 19, 32, 899
Denmark ... ..	473, 475
Derby, Lord ... ..	1260
Derby scheme of enlistment, 1130, 1131	
<i>Derfflinger</i> , 105, 564, 565, 566 ( <i>also note</i> ),	
567, 570, 1028, 1048, 1054, 1068.	
German battle-cruiser. Launched	
1913. Displacement 28,000 tons.	
Speed 27 knots. Eight 12 in.,	
twelve 5·9 in. guns.	

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	Page		Page
<i>Euryalus</i> ... ..	278	Fisher, Admiral Lord— <i>cont.</i>	
Cruiser. Launched 1901. Displacement 12,000 tons. Speed 21½ knots. Two 9.2 in., twelve 6 in. guns.		—memorandum on position and policy of Navy ... ..	581 4
Evan-Thomas, Admiral Sir Hugh	1024, 1029, 1032.	—opposition to Dardanelles offensive ... ..	576-8, 740-4
Ewing, Sir Alfred ... ..	415	—orders <i>Queen Elizabeth</i> to be brought home ... ..	781
<i>Exmouth</i> ... ..	782	—resignation ... ..	792-798
Explosives ... ..	1194	—on submarines ... ..	721
"Eye-Witness" ... ..	510	—ultimatum to Government ... ..	805-6
F		—views on the Baltic ... ..	480-3
<i>Falcon</i> ... ..	337	—views on Borkum ... ..	481-2, 534
Destroyer. Launched 1899. Displacement 375 tons. Speed 30 knots. One 12-pr., five 6-pr. guns.		—views on Bulgaria ... ..	739
Falkenhayn, General von ... ..	944	—views on Turkey ... ..	529-32
—dismissed ... ..	1094	Fitzgerald, Colonel ... ..	528, 605, 608, 667
—gauges the psychology of the French ... ..	994	Fleets, strength of ... ..	1431-2
—Memorandum for the Emperor ... ..	984 6	Foch, Marshal, 284, 290, 292, 297, 339, 405, 492, 493, 966, 1149, 1264, 1392, 1311, 1315, 1351, 1355, 1359, 1360, 1363-4, 1370	
—on Russian advance under Brusiloff ... ..	1009-10	—Commander of French and British armies ... ..	1292
—on Verdun ... ..	1002	—praises operations of British army ... ..	1373
—policy in 1915 ... ..	974-91	<i>Foresight</i> ... ..	334
Falklands and Coronel, 364-395, 406, 488		Scout. Launched 1904. Displacement 2,850 tons. Speed 25 knots. Nine 4 in. guns.	
<i>Falmouth</i> ... ..	1065	<i>Formidable</i> ... ..	495-6, 577
Fanshawe, General ... ..	875, 909	<i>Fortune</i> ... ..	1059
Farragut, Admiral ... ..	675	<i>Foudre</i> ... ..	535, 550
Fayolle, General ... ..	1214, 1288, 1322	Fowler, Sir Henry ... ..	18
<i>Fearless</i> ... ..	261, 277, 579	<i>Fox</i> ... ..	245, 246-7, 250
Light cruiser. Launched 1912. Displacement 3,440 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Ten 4 in. guns.		Light cruiser. Launched 1893. Displacement 4,360 tons. Speed 19½ knots. Two 6 in., eight 4.7 in. guns.	
Ferdinand, King ... ..	448, 893, 1397	Franchet d'Espérey, General 283, 289, 292, 1163.	
Ferzi Bey ... ..	865	Franco-German War ... ..	5, 462
<i>Firedrake</i> ... ..	166, 419, 421-2	Franco-Russian Alliance of 1892 ... ..	6-8
Destroyer. Launched 1912. Displacement 860 tons. Speed 33 knots. Two 4 in. guns.		Francois, General von ... ..	(note) 839
Fisher, Admiral Lord 63, 86, 95-6, 103, 108, 136-7, 195, 279, 360-1, 372, 373-4, 379-82, 384, 390, 420, 488, 490, 513, 533, 536, 542, 543, 545, 551, 555-6, 559, 561, 588-9, 602, 616, 632, 636, 645, 648, 653, 667, 737-8, 748, 764, 785, 786-7, 790, 791, 804, 810, 814, 846, 862, 929, 930, 1167		Franz Ferdinand, Archduke ... ..	978
—and Admiral Bayly ... ..	495	<i>Frauenlob</i> ... ..	262, 1058
—and air raids ... ..	501-2	German light cruiser. Launched 1902. Displacement 2,657 tons. Speed 21 knots. Ten 4.1 in. guns.	
—appointed First Sea Lord ... ..	360-1	French, Field Marshal Lord, 188, 189, 212, 217, 219, 221, 232-3, 235, 282-4, 315, 318, 327, 330-1, 337-40, 490-1, 502-3, 506, 521-2, 530-1, 576, 600, 688, 768, 886, 893, 940, 945, 1135, 1136, 1212, 1291.	
—at the Admiralty ... ..	396-413	—differences between French and Kitchener ... ..	330-1, 338
—character sketch ... ..	53-8	—letters to Churchill 492, 494, 810-1	
—and Falklands victory ... ..	406-7	—letter to Mr. Churchill on Lord Kitchener's visit to Paris ... ..	234
—first resignation ... ..	501-2		
—letter on a naval programme ... ..	79-80		
—memorandum on the Dardanelles, 775-9			



	Page
French and British commands, relations between ...	1311-2
French Army Casualties. <i>See</i> Casualties.	
French Army, mutinies in ...	1168-9
French General Staff ...	41-2
French Navy ...	183
<i>See also</i> under names of ships.	
Freyberg, Colonel ...	1302
Frontal attacks ...	462-3
Fuller, Colonel ...	1218-9
Furious ...	412
Cruiser. Launched 1916. Displacement 19,100 tons. Speed 31½ knots. Two 18 in., eight 5½ in. guns.	
Furse, General ...	1215-6, 1265

## G

<i>Galatea</i> ...	578-80, 1024, 1036
Gallièni, General ...	231, 281-4, 288, 938-9, 941-4, 997, 1004-5, 1148, 1164.
—Joffre's citation in the <i>Gazette</i> , 943 ( <i>note</i> )	
Gallipoli. <i>See</i> Dardanelles.	
Gamelin, General ...	1150
Gas, Poisonous, ...	466, 508-26, 906, 1345
<i>Gaulois</i> ...	611-2, 641, 643-4, 656
Geddes, Sir Auckland ...	1185
Geddes, Sir Eric ...	1172, 1186-7
Geier ...	239, 249, 386-7
German light cruiser. Launched 1894. Displacement 1,597 tons. Speed 16 knots. Eight 4½ in. guns.	
General, German mail steamer ...	201
General <i>Craufurd</i> ...	789
General Election of 1906 ...	18
General Grant ...	789
Generals and Admirals in Action ...	569
George V ...	883, 1307
George, David Lloyd, ...	15, 17, 20-1, 31-4, 222-3, 525, 527, 531, 598, 746, 798, 815, 823, 835, 891, 912, 959, 982, 1101, 1130, 1132, 1137, 1138, 1140-2, 1144-6, 1154, 1170, 1177, 1250-1, 1259-60, 1289-92, 1335.
—and Coalition Government, 798, 804-5	
—speech at Bankers' Association on Agadir crisis, 32; its effect on Germany ...	33-34
—his great services ...	1145-6
—remarks at Conference in Paris, May 4 and 5, 1917 ...	1167-8
—resigns as Secretary of State for War ...	1140
—and Salonica ...	981
—succeeds Mr. Asquith ...	1140-1

	Page
George, David Lloyd— <i>cont.</i>	
—and tanks ...	1082
—and unified command ...	1259
Germany, alliance with Turkey ...	448
—Army Casualties. <i>See</i> Casualties.	
—Army order for attack on March 21, 1917 ...	1277-8
—colonial expansion ...	8-9, 71
—criticism of British Navy ...	476-8
—finance, 1909 ...	25-6
—General Staff ...	1095-6, 1111
—merchant ships captured ...	257
—Naval Policy ...	476-8, 497-9
—Navy, ...	9-11, 23-5, 26, 37-8, 262-3, 414-5. <i>See also</i> Names of Ships.
—Navy Law ...	71-93
—Navy signal-books ...	414-5, 1020
—oversca trade ...	257
—plan for attacking France, Sir H. Wilson's view ...	39-40
—spies ...	36
—torpedo boats ...	402-3
—War Policy in 1915, success of ...	976-7
—outnumbered the French at the outbreak ...	940
—and balance of power ...	5-9
—and Boer War ...	9
—declares war on Russia ...	175
—invited to join Japanese Alliance... ..	11
—Moroccan problem ...	11
—renounces submarine campaign ...	1398
—and tanks ...	1082
—and unified command ...	1259
Gerrard, Major ...	267
Gerster's <i>Die Schwaben an der Ancre</i> quoted ...	1075-6
<i>Ghurka</i> ...	732
Glasgow, 367-8, 370-3, 375-8, 381, 382, 384-5, 387-8, 390, 393-5, 406.	
Light cruiser. Launched 1909. Displacement 4,800 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Two 6 in., ten 4 in. guns.	
Glorious ...	412
Cruiser. Launched 1916. Displacement 18,600 tons. Speed 32 knots. Four 15 in., eighteen 4 in. guns.	
Glory ...	245, 258, 542
Battleship. Launched 1899. Displacement 12,950 tons. Speed 18½ knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
Gloucester 201, 203, 206-7, 386, 451, 578-9	
Light cruiser. Launched 1909. Displacement 4,800 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Two 6 in., ten 4 in. guns.	

- Gneisenau* 239, 247, 248-50, 252-5, 364-72, 374-6, 378, 380, 384, 386-7, 392-5, 400  
German cruiser. Launched 1906.  
Displacement 11,420 tons. Speed 22½ knots. Eight 8·2 in., six 5·9 in. guns.
- Godfrey, Captain ... .. 534
- Godley, General Sir A. J. ... 909, 1344
- Goeben* 167, 169, 179-184, 200-9, 437-9, 441, 445-6, 449, 453, 535, 543, 578, 581, 603.  
German battle-cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 22,640 tons. Speed 26 knots. Ten 11 in., twelve 5·9 in. guns.
- Good Hope* 239, 365-73, 375-7, 382, 384, 387, 395, 406.  
Cruiser. Launched 1901. Displacement 14,100 tons. Speed 23 knots. Two 9·2 in., sixteen 6 in. guns.
- Goodenough, Admiral 420, 564, 1036, 1038
- Goliath* ... .. 542, 781
- Gordon, Sir Alexander Hamilton ... 1317
- Gordon, Sir Charles ... .. 1337
- Gough, General Sir Hubert, 1077, 1282, 1286, 1292-3.
- Goulding, Sir Edward ... .. 174
- Gouraud, General, 842, 888, 1356-7, 1363
- Gourgaud, General ... .. 956
- Government, Fall of Asquith ... 784-814
- Grafton* ... .. 846
- Grandmaison, Colonel de ... 938, 1152
- Grant, Captain Noel ... .. 239
- Grant, General ... .. 967
- Grant-Duff, Col. ... .. 36 (*note*)
- Greece, declines to join Allies, 602; Greek army and Dardanelles, 487; also 473, 475, 527, 619-21
- Greene, Sir Graham ... .. 362, 1174
- Grey, Sir Edward (later Viscount), 17-22, 29-33, 71-75, 79, 87, 116, 141, 145, 150, 155, 158, 160-5, 172-3, 175, 299, 304-5, 308, 319, 432, 438, 441, 445, 446-7, 491, 531, 550, 584, 590, 616-7, 619, 622, 735-6, 802, 883, 912, 979.
- Guépratte, Admiral ... 641, 644, 772
- Guerre Mondiale* ... .. 993, 1086
- Guest, Captain ... .. 506, 1142
- Gumbinnen, Battle of ... .. 228-9
- Gun: weight of shell fired ... .. 94-5
- Gunnery ... .. 94-9

## H

- Haig, Earl, 67, 327, 522, 896, 1000, 1070-1, 1078, 1087, 1089, 1090, 1136, 1155-6, 1206-8, 1213, 1250, 1258-61, 1278-9, 1292, 1355-6, 1359, 1360, 1374, 1375.

*Vol. I, pages 1-718; Vol. II, pages 719-1453.*

Haig, Earl—*cont.*

- and Sir William Robertson's supersession ... .. 1260-1
- appeals to Foch for aid at Battle of Lys ... .. 1304
- appointed Commander of British army in France ... .. 946
- asks that Foch be given command of the French and British armies... 1292
- character of ... .. 946-7
- Colonel Henderson on ... .. 947
- differs with Foch on advance, 1370-3, 1373, 1388.
- his high services ... .. 1373
- letter to Nivelle ... .. 1154
- on artillery situation ... .. 1205
- Order of the Day at the Battle of the Lys ... .. 1302-3
- requests the War Cabinet to inform him if he is subject to Nivelle ... .. 1156
- telegram to Churchill on Lys battle ... .. 1306
- See also* Boraston, Colonel J. H.
- Halcyon* ... .. 396
- Torpedo gunboat. Launched 1894. Displacement 1,070 tons. Speed 19 knots. Two 4·7 in. guns.
- Haldane, Lord, asks for a Naval War Staff, 41; goes to Berlin, 74-5; Haldane Plan, 188; also 17, 35, 49, 77-8, 83, 175, 590, 810.
- Halil Bey ... .. 432
- Hall, Captain Reginald ... .. 414
- Hall, Captain S. S. ... .. 721
- Hall, Admiral W. R. ... .. 740
- Hamidieh* ... .. 449, 681
- Turkish light cruiser. Launched 1903. Displacement 3,800 tons. Speed 22 knots. Two 6 in., eight 4·7 in. guns.
- Hamilton, Sir Ian, against Dardanelles evacuation, 907; appointed Commander-in-Chief at Dardanelles, 625-6; arrives at Suvla Bay, 871-2; at Dardanelles, 626-7; 'Dig in and stick it out,' 762; to Lord Kitchener, 666; recalled, 907; also 615, 627, 634, 636-7, 646-7, 648, 652-7, 660-64, 684, 737, 751, 753-4, 763-5, 768, 772-3, 778, 782, 787, 808, 810, 823-5, 827-9, 841, 850, 855, 856, 862, 875-6, 903, 930.
- Hammersley, General ... .. 870, 872
- Hampshire*, 248, 249-50, 254-5, 386, 451, 452, 578.  
Cruiser. Launched 1903. Displacement 10,850 tons. Speed 23 knots. Four 7·5 in., six 6 in. guns.

	Page		Page
Hampshire Regiment ... ..	756-62	Hood, Admiral 193, 332, 335-7, 349, 397, 406, 733, 1036, 1041, 1046, 1048, 1049	
Hanbury-Williams, Sir John ... ..	528	Hopwood, Sir Francis. <i>See</i> Southborough, Lord.	
Hankey, Sir Maurice, 36, 130, 168, 510, 512, 519-20, 527, 530, 532, 542, 589, 835		Hornby, Admiral ... ..	258
<i>Hannibal</i> ... ..	541, 580	Hornsby ... ..	512
Harcourt, Sir William ... ..	14	Hötzendorf, General Conrad von	
Harington, General ... ..	1264, 1345	229, 839-40, 1010	
Harland & Wolff ... ..	412	House, Colonel ... ..	1123
Harold, King ... ..	983	Huguet, Colonel ... ..	283
Hartlepool bombardment ... ..	418-9, 429	<i>Humber</i> ... ..	332
'Harwich Striking Force,' 260, 332, 397-8, 417-9, 573, 586, 801, 1064, 1065, 1069		Monitor. Launched 1913. Displacement 1,250 tons. Speed 11½ knots. Two 6 in., two 4·7 in. guns.	
Hase, Commander von ... ..	105 ( <i>note</i> )	Humbert, General ... ..	1322
Hausen, General von ... ..	290, 292-3	Hunter, Sir John ... ..	1187
Hedin, Dr. Sven ... ..	332-3	<i>Hyacinth</i> ... ..	385
Heimbürg, Lieutenant von ... ..	849 ( <i>note</i> )	Light cruiser. Launched 1898. Displacement 5,600 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eleven 6 in. guns.	
Heligoland ... ..	480, 481, 497	I	
Heligoland exchanged for Zanzibar ... ..	8	<i>Ibuki</i> ... ..	249, 253-4, 258, 389, 452
Heligoland Bight Action ... ..	260-2	Japanese cruiser. Launched 1907. Displacement 14,620 tons. Speed 22 knots. Four 12 in., eight 8 in., fourteen 4·7 in. guns.	
Henderson, Colonel, on Haig ... ..	947	<i>Idzumo</i> ... ..	371, 372-3, 383, 385-7
<i>Henri IV</i> ... ..	645	Japanese cruiser. Launched 1899. Displacement 9,750 tons. Speed 22 knots. Four 8 in., fourteen 6 in. guns.	
Henry, Sir Edward ... ..	35	<i>Ikoma</i> ... ..	385
Hentsch, Colonel ... ..	294, 296, 1095	Japanese cruiser. Launched 1906. Displacement 13,750 tons. Speed 21 knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in., twelve 4·7 in. guns.	
Herr, General ... ..	992, 1001	<i>Illustrious</i> ... ..	729, 800
Hervey, Major, death in <i>Lion</i> ... ..	1028	<i>Imperatrizza Marie</i> ... ..	585
Herzegovina ... ..	21-2	Imperial Defence, Committee of	131, 168
Hetherington, Major ... ..	513-4	<i>Implacable</i> ... ..	645, 757, 782
Hicks-Beach, Sir M. ... ..	16	<i>Inconstant</i> ... ..	409, 580
<i>Highflyer</i> ... ..	239, 385	Light cruiser. Launched 1914. Displacement 3,500 tons. Speed 29 knots. Two 6 in., six 4 in. guns.	
Light cruiser. Launched 1898. Displacement 5,600 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eleven 6 in. guns.		<i>Indefatigable</i> 105, 181-2, 247, 449, 530, 541, 551-2, 579, 1027, 1029, 1065-67. Battle-cruiser. Launched 1909. Displacement 18,750 tons. Speed 25 knots. Eight 12 in., sixteen 4 in. guns.	
Hill, General ... ..	863	Indicator Nets ... ..	730, 733
<i>Himalaya</i> ... ..	249		
Armed merchant cruiser.			
Hindenburg, Marshal von, 229, 448, 467-70, 839, 881, 986, 1095.			
—made Chief of Staff ... ..	1094		
Hindenburg Line ... ..	1156, 1391		
Hipper, Admiral von, 423, 428, 559, 564, 568-9, 927, 1019, 1032, 1041, 1043, 1044, 1048.			
<i>Hizen</i> ... ..	372-3, 384, 385-7		
Japanese battleship. Launched 1900. Displacement 12,700 tons. Speed 18 knots. Four 12 in., sixteen 6 in. guns.			
<i>Hogue</i> ... ..	277-9		
Cruiser. Launched 1900. Displacement 12,000 tons. Speed 21½ knots. Two 9·2 in., twelve 6 in. guns.			
Holbrook, Commander	343, 453, 846		
Holland ... ..	473, 475, 742		
—and neutrality ... ..	299, 302		
Holtzendorf, Admiral von ... ..	1114, 1116		

- Page
- Indomitable* 181-2, 201, 209, 247, 370, 444,  
446, 564-7, 570, 578, 586.  
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1907.  
Displacement 17,250 tons. Speed  
25 knots. Eight 12 in., sixteen  
4 in. guns.
- Inflexible* 201, 354, 384-6, 390, 393-5, 398,  
407, 534, 541, 552, 579-80, 586, 611,  
638-44, 647, 654, 656, 742, 745-6.  
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1907.  
Displacement 17,250 tons. Speed  
25 knots. Eight 12 in., sixteen  
4 in. guns.
- Ingenohl, Admiral von 423, 426, 499, 558
- Inniskillings ... .. 757
- Intelligence Department 408, 414-6, 500,  
506.
- Invasion 134, 220, 338, 346-7, 404-5, 785,  
819.
- Invincible* 197, 261, 354, 384-6, 390, 393-5,  
398, 407, 579, 580, 586, 1041, 1043,  
1048, 1065.  
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1907.  
Displacement 17,250 tons. Speed  
25 knots. Eight 12 in., sixteen  
4 in. guns.
- Ireland and the European balance 136-53
- Iron Duke* 427, 1036, 1037, 1038, 1043,  
1058-9, 1061, 1065.  
Dreadnought battleship. Launched  
1912. Displacement 25,000 tons.  
Speed 21 knots. Ten 13.5 in.,  
twelve 6 in. guns.
- Irresistible* 540, 611-2, 624-5, 638, 639,  
642-4, 656.
- Istomine, General ... .. 618, 826
- Isvolsky, M. ... .. 22
- Italian disaster ... .. 1213-6
- Italian neutrality ... .. 180, 183
- Italy and the Allies ... .. 474, 618-9

## J

- Jackson, Sir Henry, report on Carden  
Scheme, 547-9; also 245-6, 252, 362,  
516, 532, 533, 545, 551-3, 602, 606, 614,  
628-30, 633, 648, 661, 807, 896.
- Jackson, Admiral Thomas ... 362, 414
- Jäger ... .. 292
- Jameson Raid ... .. 9, 15
- Japanese Alliance ... .. 11
- Japanese Navy, 386; convoy, 254. *See also*  
names of ships.
- Japanese ultimatum to Germany ... 248
- Jellicoe, Lord 62, 110, 136, 175-6, 210,  
211-2, 261, 338, 344-5, 351-2, 354, 361,  
384, 391-404, 427, 481 (*note*), 554-7,  
561-3, 571, 576, 582, 738, 740, 1012-69

Jellicoe, Lord—*cont.*

- letter to Admiralty, October 14,  
1914 ... .. 1017-8
- letter to Lord Fisher, December  
4, 1914 ... .. 1016-7
- opinion of Mr. Churchill ... .. 82
- raids the British coast in 1913 ... 115
- responsibilities of ... .. 1069
- study of ... .. 1015
- submarine alarm ... 338, 344-6, 349
- system of training in Navy ... 1034
- takes command of the Fleets ... 176
- Jerram, Admiral ... .. 248, 1054
- Joffre, General 217-9, 230-2, 234-5, 272,  
281-4, 288, 293, 304-6, 331, 405, 471,  
491-4, 505-6, 531, 576, 601, 688, 832,  
835, 884, 888-90, 893, 898, 937, 939-45,  
951, 966, 997-8, 1000-1, 1005.
- Salonica ... .. 982
- letter on defences at Verdun ... 997-8
- orders attack by army at Salonica 1008
- Pierrefeu on ... .. 1149-50
- plans for 1917 ... .. 1147-8
- position deteriorates ... .. 1004
- removed from command ... 1148-9
- Jonescu, Také ... .. 880, 977, 979
- Jonquil* ... .. 868
- Joule* ... .. 849
- Jutland, Battle of ... .. 266, 1012-69

## K

- Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* ... .. 239  
German armed merchant cruiser.
- Karlsruhe* 239, 365, 369, 378, 394, 587  
German light cruiser. Launched  
1912. Displacement 4,820 tons.  
Speed 27 knots. Twelve 4.1 in.  
guns.
- Keble's Christian Year* ... .. 110
- Kelly, Captain John ... .. 203, 206
- Kelly, Captain W. A. Howard ... 206
- Kemal Bey ... .. 759, 866, 869, 874
- Kemmel Hill ... .. 1311
- Kenna, General ... .. 875
- Kent* ... .. 383, 385-7, 390, 393-5  
Cruiser. Launched 1901. Dis-  
placement 9,800 tons. Speed 23  
knots. Fourteen 6 in. guns.
- Kerr, Admiral Mark ... .. 443-4
- Kersaint* ... .. 249  
French gun-vessel. Launched  
1897. Displacement 1,223 tons.  
Speed 15 knots. One 5.5 in., five  
3.9 in. guns.

	Page		Page
Keyes, Admiral Sir Roger, plan for forcing Dardanelles	910-3; also 211, 260-2, 276, 361, 417, 419, 421-2, 428, 668, 689, 720, 780, 814, 908, 913-4, 919, 929, 984, 1069, 1239, 1242.	Köln ... ..	262, 578, 586
Khaki Election ... ..	15, 18	German light cruiser. Launched 1909. Displacement 4,280 tons. Speed 27 knots. Twelve 4·1 in. guns.	
Kiderlen-Wächter ... ..	28, 34	Koltchak ... ..	1119
Kiel Canal ... ..	73, 479	Komet ... ..	239
King Alfred ... ..	277	German torpedo gunboat. Launched 1892. Displacement 971 tons. Speed 21 knots. Four 3·4 in. guns.	
Cruiser. Launched 1901. Displacement 14,100 tons. Speed 23 knots. Two 9·2 in., sixteen 6 in. guns.		König ... ..	1044
King Edwards, class of ship ...	398, 400-1	Königsberg 239, 241, 244-7, 255, 389-90, 450.	
Kitchener, Lord 119-120, 163, 188, 190-2, 219-21, 225, 228, 232, 234, 236, 238, 257, 259, 263, 265, 269, 272, 299, 302-8, 310, 313, 316-9, 321-2, 330-1, 338, 341, 356, 404-5, 443, 447, 490-4, 496, 502-5, 509, 527-9, 542-3, 550-2, 557, 593, 595, 597-600, 649, 687-9, 751, 753, 787, 804, 806, 810, 840, 884-6, 889-91, 944, 982.		German light cruiser. Launched 1906. Displacement 3,350 tons. Speed 23 knots. Ten 4·1 in. guns.	
—and Admiral Lord Dundonald's secret war plan ... ..	516	Kronprinz Wilhelm ... ..	587
—ammunition supply ... ..	746	Kruger, President ... ..	9
—appoints Sir Ian Hamilton to Dardanelles ... ..	625-8	Kühl, General ... ..	296, 1276-7
—assumes responsibility for military operations in Dardanelles ...	616	Kurama ... ..	385
—British Territorial system ...	191-2	Japanese cruiser. Launched 1907. Displacement 14,620 tons. Speed 22 knots. Four 12 in., eight 8 in., fourteen 4·7 in. guns.	
—and compulsory service ...	1130	Kuroki, General ... ..	463
—and Dardanelles 534, 589-92, 603-10, 614-6, 628, 630, 664-6, 755, 763-4, 773, 784-5, 823, 856-7, 912, 917.			
—differences between Kitchener and French ... ..	330, 338		
—effects of Mons ... ..	221		
—and General Birdwood ... ..	912		
—goes to Dardanelles ... ..	913		
—goes to Paris and Lord French's comment ... ..	232-5		
—his decline in authority ... ..	947-9		
—and newspaper attack ... ..	802		
—orders batteries from India ...	238-9		
—pays visit of ceremony to Churchill ... ..	806-7		
—Queen Elizabeth withdrawal from Dardanelles ... ..	781-2		
—sceptical about tanks ... ..	1082		
—Secretary of State for War ...	190		
—and War Office ... ..	798, 802		
Kluck, General von 212, 281, 287-9, 291-6			
Knobelsdorf, General von ... ..	995-6		
Knox, Colonel ... ..	471		

	Page		Page
<i>Leipzig</i> 239, 250, 367-9, 374, 376, 382, 393-5.		Lovett, Robert S. ... ..	1337
German light cruiser. Launched 1905. Displacement 3,200 tons. Speed 22½ knots. Ten 4.1 in. guns.		Lowland Territorial Division ... ..	860
<i>Le Marchand</i> ... ..	867-8	Lowry, Admiral ... ..	555, 572
Lemberg, Battle of ... ..	229, 470, 974	Loxley, Captain ... ..	495
<i>Lennox</i> ... ..	332	<i>Loyal</i> ... ..	332
Destroyer. Launched 1914. Displacement 965 tons. Speed 29 knots. Three 4 in. guns.		Destroyer. Launched 1913. Displacement 965 tons. Speed 29 knots. Three 4 in. guns.	
<i>Leontev</i> , General ... ..	437	<i>Lucas</i> , Lord ... ..	189-90
<i>Leopard</i> ... ..	397	<i>Ludendorff</i> , General, 229-30, 296, 467-70, 655, 839, 925, 969, 1081, 1119, 1276-7, 1287-9, 1323, 1354, 1358, 1360, 1365, 1382.	
Destroyer. Launched 1897. Displacement 350 tons. Speed 30 knots. One 12-pr., five 6-pr. guns.		—dismissed ... ..	1398
<i>Lepic</i> , Capt. ... ..	281	—favours U-boat warfare ... ..	1116-7
<i>Leviathan</i> ... ..	578	—Hindenburg on ... ..	1095
<i>Liao-yang</i> ... ..	463	—made First Quartermaster-General, 1094	
Licensing Bill, 1908 ... ..	20	—on the situation in October, 1916, 987	
<i>Lichnowsky</i> , Prince ... ..	193	—on Verdun ... ..	1003
Lighters ... ..	412	<i>Lurcher</i> ... ..	166, 262, 419, 421
<i>Limpus</i> , Admiral ... ..	445	Destroyer. Launched 1912. Displacement 860 tons. Speed 35 knots. Two 4 in. guns.	
<i>Lindequist</i> , von ... ..	48	<i>Lusitania</i> ... ..	769-70
<i>Lion</i> , 66, 82, 100, 109, 262, 354, 427, 563-70, 1024, 1026-9, 1032, 1038, 1043, 1044, 1054, 1067.		<i>Lützow</i> 742 ( <i>note</i> ), 1027-8, 1052, 1054, 1068.	
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1910. Displacement 26,350 tons. Speed 27 knots. Eight 13.5 in., sixteen 4 in. guns.		' <i>Luxus Flotte</i> ' ... ..	77, 85
<i>Lipsett</i> , General ... ..	1261, 1344	<i>Lyautey</i> , General ... ..	1160
Liquid fuel ... ..	100-105	<i>Lys</i> , Battle of ... ..	1297-1302
<i>Lively</i> ... ..	397		
Destroyer. Launched 1900. Displacement 385 tons. Speed 30 knots. One 12-pr., five 6-pr. guns.			
<i>Lloyd</i> , George ... ..	628		
<i>Lockyer</i> , Captain H. C. ... ..	757		
London Conference, 1871 ... ..	22		
<i>London</i> .. ... ..	645, 782		
<i>Longford</i> , General Lord ... ..	875		
<i>Loos</i> , Battle of ... ..	958, 977		
<i>Lord Clive</i> ... ..	789		
<i>Lord Nelson</i> , 197, 539, 542, 553, 587 ( <i>note</i> ), 625, 639-42, 644, 744-6.			
Battleship. Launched 1906. Displacement 16,500 tons. Speed 18½ knots. Four 12 in., ten 9.2 in. guns.			
<i>Loreburn</i> , Earl (Sir Robert Reid), 17, 31			
<i>Lossberg</i> , General von ... ..	1313		
<i>Louis</i> of Battenberg, Prince, orders the Fleet not to disperse, 160; letter of resignation, 359-61; also 61, 66-7, 90, 121, 139, 153, 183-4, 195, 220, 247, 277, 314-8, 328, 355, 379, 415, 481, 516-7, 721.			

	Page		Page
Maistre, General, on the British troops, 1321		Meteor ... ..	571
Majestic ... .. 246, 258, 639, 644		Metternich, Count, ... .. 29, 33-4, 37-8, 919	
Battleship. Launched 1895. Dis-		Meux, Admiral Sir H. ... ..	730
placement 14,900 tons. Speed 17½		Michael, Grand Duke ... ..	528-9
knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in.		Michel, General, ... .. 218, 937-8, 940, 1163-4	
guns.		Micheler, General ... .. 1152, 1161, 1163-4	
Majoresco, M. ... ..	977	Milbanke, Col. Sir John ... ..	875
Malaya ... .. 84, 105, 1032, 1068		'Military Aspects of the Continental	
Dreadnought battleship. Launched		Problem, 1911,' by Mr. Churchill... 42-6	
1914. Displacement 27,500 tons.		Millerand, M. ... ..	561, 943
Speed 25 knots. Eight 15 in.,		Milne, Sir Berkeley, 180-1, 201-3, 207-9,	
twelve 6 in. guns.		1099.	
Mallet, Sir Louis ... ..	441, 447	Milner, Lord ... .. 1291-2, 1304	
Mangin, General,		Miners, strike of Cumberland ... ..	1437
1108-9, 1148-9, 1151, 1357-63		Minerva ... .. 246, 451	
—on his victory ... ..	1363	Light cruiser. Launched 1895. Dis-	
—reinstated ... ..	1357	placement 5,600 tons. Speed 19½	
Mannesmann Brothers ... ..	28	knots. Eleven 6 in. guns.	
Manœuvre ... ..	464-5	Mines (sea) ... .. 1238-9, 1242-3	
Man-power ... ..	1249-57	Minotaur, 106, 247-50, 253-4, 258, 385, 390,	
Marie, Queen ... ..	978	399, 578, 1054.	
Marine Brigade ... .. 192, 263-4, 269, 272-3		Cruiser. Launched 1906. Displace-	
Mariotte ... ..	849	ment 14,600 tons. Speed 22½ knots.	
Marius ... ..	477	Four 9·2 in., ten 7·5 in. guns.	
Marix, Commander ... .. (note) 323		Moltke ... .. 564, 570	
Marlborough ... .. 1044, 1046		Moltke, H., Count ... .. 5, 9, 38, 280	
Marne, Battle of ... ..	281-98	Moltke, General von, 215, 228-30, 282, 285,	
Mars ... .. 541, 729		288-9, 293, 294, 296-7, 974.	
Marsh, Mr. ... .. (note) 155		Monarch ... .. 82, 554, 578	
Marshall, Major ... ..	909	Dreadnought battleship. Launched	
Marshal Ney ... ..	789	1911. Displacement 22,500 tons.	
Marwitz ... .. 289, 298		Speed 21 knots. Ten 13·5 in.,	
Masteron-Smith, Sir James. See Smith.		sixteen 4 in. guns.	
Masurian Lakes ... ..	467-70	Monitors ... .. 410-12, 466	
Maude, General ... .. 875, 909		Monmouth, 239, 367-73, 375-7, 379, 382,	
Maunoury, General, 231-2, 281, 283, 287-89,		384, 387, 395, 406.	
291-2, 295.		Cruiser. Launched 1901. Displace-	
Mauretania ... .. 780, 830		ment 9,800 tons. Speed 22·4 knots.	
Maurice of Battenberg, Prince ... ..	360	Fourteen 6 in. guns.	
Maurice, General ... ..	1289	Monro, General Sir Charles, 907-9, 912,	
Max, Prince ... .. 1397		918, 920, 922.	
Maxwell, Sir John ... .. 764, 856-7, 912		Mons ... .. 221	
Melbourne, Lord ... ..	38	Montagu, Mr. ... .. 1174, 1178-9	
Melbourne, 248-50, 253-5, 258, 386, 389, 451		Montcalm ... .. 248-9, 252-5, 383, 385	
Australian light cruiser. Launched		French cruiser. Launched 1900.	
1912. Displacement 5,400 tons.		Displacement 9,367 tons. Speed	
Speed 25½ knots. Eight 6 in. guns.		21 knots. Two 7·6 in., eight 6·4	
Mensdorf, Count ... ..	193	in., four 3·9 in. guns.	
Mercantile marine ... ..	199	Moore, Admiral ... .. 95, 103, 563, 567-9	
Mersey ... .. 332		Morgan, Messrs. ... .. 1337	
Monitor. Launched 1913. Displace-		Morley, Lord ... .. 17, 31, 189	
ment 1,250 tons. Speed 11½ knots.		Morning Post ... .. 1137	
Two 6 in., two 4·7 in. guns.		Morocco crisis ... .. 18-20, 28-50	
Messimy, General, 231, 283, 938, 1163-4		Moser, General von ... .. 1095	
Messines ... .. 492		Motor omnibuses ... .. 273, 493.	
Messudieh ... .. 846			

	Page
<i>Mousquet</i> ... .. 239	
French destroyer. Launched 1902.	
Displacement 300 tons. Speed 30 knots. One 9-pr., six 3-pr. guns.	
Mukden ... .. 463	
Munitions, 746-9, 1189-98, 1265-74, 1347-50, 1375-81.	
Munitions, Ministry of 1170-1205, 1433-4	
Munitions Minutes and Letters, 1434-40	
Munitions, Russian shortage of ... 470-1	
Munro, Commander ... .. 350-1	
Munster Fusiliers ... .. 756, 762	
Murray, Sir James Wolfe ... .. 628	
Mustapha Kemal Bey, 759, 866, 869, 874	
Murray, Sir Archibald ... .. 282-3	
Mutinies in French army ... .. 1168-9	
<i>Myrmidon</i> ... .. 336	
Destroyer. Launched 1900. Displacement 370 tons. Speed 30 knots. One 12-pr., five 6-pr. guns.	

## N

Napier, General ... .. 756	
Napolcon ... .. 115, 185, 531, 856	
Nasmith, Commander ... 428, 724, 847, 848	
<i>Nassau</i> ... .. 1059	
National Service Bill ... .. 1137	
Naval Brigades ... .. 313-23, 325	
Naval Intelligence Division ... 408, 414-6	
Naval Reserves called out ... .. 175	
Naval Volunteers ... .. 192-3	
Naval War Staff ... .. 41, 52, 67-70	
Nelson, Lord ... .. 1034	
<i>Neptune</i> ... .. 91	
Dreadnought battleship. Launched 1909. Displacement 19,900 tons. Speed 21 knots. Ten 12 in., sixteen 4 in. guns.	
Nets ... .. 726-7, 730-1, 733	
<i>Newcastle</i> ... .. 250, 371-3, 383, 385-6	
Light cruiser. Launched 1909. Displacement 4,800 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Two 6 in., ten 4 in. guns.	
New Guinea Expedition ... .. 254	
Newspaper Press ... .. 356, 1133-7	
New Zealand ... .. 252-3	
—contingent sails ... .. 253-4	
<i>New Zealand</i> , 167, 179, 208, 261, 354, 384, 564-7, 1026, 1028.	
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 18,800 tons. Speed 25 knots. Eight 12 in., sixteen 4 in. guns.	

	Page
Nicholas II ... 620, 881, 883, 1119-20	
Nicholas, Grand Duke, and the Baltic, 479-80; also 470-1, 550-1, 589, 593, 839-40, 881.	
Nicholson, Sir William ... 36, 188	
Nicolai, Colonel ... .. 685	
Nicuport ... .. 334, 336	
Nigerian Palm Kernels debate ... 1138	
Nitrates ... .. 1337-9	
Nivelle, General ... 1108, 1109, 1148-69	
—becomes Commander-in-Chief, 1149-50	
—direction to Haig ... .. 1157	
—dismissed ... .. 1169	
—Staff Memorandum captured by Germans ... .. 1158	
Nixon, General ... .. 948	
Nogi ... .. 463	
Northcliffe, Lord, 802, 1133, 1135-7, 1140, 1170.	
—hostile to Mr. Churchill ... 1141	
Norway ... .. 473, 475	
<i>Nottingham</i> ... .. 1061, 1064	
<i>Nousret</i> ... .. 640, 675	
Noyon, Battle of ... .. 1322-4	
<i>Nürnberg</i> , 239, 249-50, 252, 367, 369, 374-5, 377, 382, 394-5.	
German light cruiser. Launched 1906. Displacement 3,396 tons. Speed 23½ knots. Ten 4½ in. guns.	
<i>Nusa</i> ... .. 239	
German Government yacht.	

## O

<i>Ocean</i> ... 246, 541, 638-9, 643-4, 656	
Battleship. Launched 1898. Displacement 12,950 tons. Speed 18½ knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
Oguri, Admiral ... .. 387	
Oil Problem ... .. 100-5, 136-7	
Oliver, Admiral Sir Henry, 311-2, 332, 362, 372, 384, 392, 407, 414-5, 418, 487, 533, 549, 559-61, 564, 591, 604, 633, 746, 774, 790, 798, 804.	
Ollivant, Colonel ... 238, 271, 273	
<i>Olympic</i> ... .. 356, 830	
Omnibuses ... .. 273, 493	
Oram, Sir Henry ... 97, 99, 107, 110	
<i>Orama</i> ... .. 369, 371, 390	
Armed merchant cruiser.	
Osmaston, Colonel ... .. 329	
Ostend, 336; British destroyers fire on, 332-3	
<i>Otranto</i> , 367-8, 370, 373, 375-7, 382, 384, 387-8, 395.	
Armed merchant cruiser.	
Otley, Sir Charles ... .. 60, 168	
Oxford and Asquith, Earl of. <i>See</i> Asquith.	



P		Page
Page, Walter H. ... ..	...	735-6
Paget, General ... ..	...	618
Painlevé, M. Paul ... ..	...	1160-4, 1167-8
Pakenham, Admiral Sir William, 61, 64, 66, 814.	...	...
Paléologue, M. ... ..	...	617
Palestine ... ..	...	1209-11
Pankhurst, Miss Christabel ... ..	...	1344
<i>Panther</i> ... ..	...	29, 34
German gunboat. Launched 1901.		...
Displacement 962 tons. Speed 13 knots. Eight 3·4 in. guns.		...
Paris, General ... ..	...	273, 316-21
Passchendaele, Battle of ... ..	...	1211-3
Pau, General ... ..	...	938
<i>Pegasus</i> ... ..	...	239
Light cruiser. Launched 1897. Displacement 2,135 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eight 4 in. guns.		...
<i>Penelope</i> ... ..	...	580
Perry, Mr. ... ..	...	1351
Pershing, General ... ..	...	1334, 1336
Persia ... ..	...	991
Persons employed on war-work ... ..		1384
Pétain, General, 1000, 1148-50, 1160-3, 1166, 1291-2, 1315, 1358-9.	...	...
—becomes Commander-in-Chief ... ..		1169
—takes command of troops in region of Verdun ... ..		1001-2
Peyton, General Sir W. E. ... ..	...	909
<i>Phaeton</i> ... ..	...	580, 627, 653-4
Phillimore, Captain ... ..	...	745
<i>Philomel</i> ... ..	...	249, 254-5
Light cruiser. Launched 1890. Displacement 2,575 tons. Speed 19 knots. Eight 4·7 in. guns.		...
Pierrefeu, Jean de, 999, 1149-50, 1152, 1317, 1320.	...	...
<i>Pioneer</i> ... ..	...	240, 255
Australian light cruiser, Launched 1899. Displacement 2,200 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eight 4 in. guns.		...
Pirie, Lieutenant ... ..	...	849
'Plan XVII' ... ..	...	217
<i>Planet</i> ... ..	...	239
German surveying vessel.		...
Plumer, Sir Herbert, 1214, 1260, 1293, 1312	...	...
Pohl, Admiral von, 196, 262, 498-500	...	...
Poisonous Gas ... ..	...	466, 508-26, 906
Pollen, Captain ... ..	...	660
<i>Pommern</i> ... ..	...	1060
Port Arthur ... ..	...	788
Portuguese Army ... ..	...	1297-8
<i>Posen</i> ... ..	...	1059
Présan, General ... ..	...	1104
Press control ... ..	...	1133

		Page
<i>Prince Eitel Friedrich</i> ... ..	...	249, 587
German armed merchant cruiser.		...
<i>Prince George</i> ... ..	...	541, 623, 639, 644
<i>Prince of Wales</i> ... ..	...	645, 782
<i>Prince Rupert</i> ... ..	...	789
<i>Princess Royal</i> , 258, 262, 354, 384-5, 398-401, 564-7, 570, 579, 1027, 1029.	...	...
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 26,350 tons. Speed 27 knots. Eight 13·5 in., sixteen 4 in. guns.		...
Priorities Committee ... ..	...	1186
Prittwitz, General von ... ..	...	228-9
<i>Proserpine</i> ... ..	...	451
Light cruiser. Launched 1896. Displacement 2,135 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eight 4 in. guns.		...
Protectionist movement ... ..	...	15, 16
<i>Provence</i> ... ..	...	685
<i>Psyche</i> ... ..	...	254-5
Light cruiser. Launched 1898. Displacement 2,200 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eight 4 in. guns.		...
<i>Pyramus</i> ... ..	...	254-5
Light cruiser. Launched 1897. Displacement 2,135 tons. Speed 20 knots. Eight 4 in. guns.		...

## Q

'Q' boats ... ..	...	730-1, 1226-8
<i>Queen</i> ... ..	...	645, 782
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i> , 102, 105, 384, 453, 536, 540-53, 577, 586, 611-2, 624-5, 639-42, 644-5, 660, 667-8, 678, 744-6, 772, 774, 781-7, 1022, 1031-2, 1036, 1047, 1068-9	...	...
Dreadnought battleship. Launched 1913. Displacement 27,500 tons. Speed 25 knots. Eight 15 in., twelve 6 in. guns.		...
<i>Queen Mary</i> , 105, 578, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1065-7.	...	...
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1912. Displacement 27,000 tons. Speed 27 knots. Eight 13·5 in., sixteen 4 in. guns.		...

## R

Radoslavoff, M. ... ..	...	883
Rawlinson, General Lord, 235, 316-22, 327-31, 1293, 1364-7.	...	...
Reading, Lord ... ..	...	223
Recruiting ... ..	...	1347-50
Redmond, Mr. ... ..	...	145, 150
Reed, General ... ..	...	869
Reid, Sir Robert, <i>See</i> Loreburn, Earl.	...	...

	Page		Page
Rennenkampf ... ..	467	Roques, General ... ..	1005
<i>Renown</i> ... ..	408, 412	Rosebery, Lord, and Anglo-French Agreement ... ..	12, 1137
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1916.		<i>Rostock</i> ... ..	1059
Displacement 26,500 tons. Speed 32 knots. Six 15 in., seventeen 4 in. guns.		Roumania ... ..	473, 475
<i>Repulse</i> ... ..	408, 412	—declares war ... ..	1097
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1916. Displacement 26,500 tons. Speed 32 knots. Six 15 in., seventeen 4 in. guns.		—disaster to ... ..	1093-1107
<i>Requin</i> ... ..	452	—joins too late ... ..	1096-8
French battleship. Launched 1885. Displacement 7,200 tons. Speed 14 knots. Two 10.8 in., six 3.9 in. guns.		Roumania and Austria-Hungary, Treaty between, 1883 ... ..	978
<i>Reshadieh</i> ... ..	169, 436	Roumanian policy ... ..	977-80, 987-91
Turkish battleship building in Great Britain. Requisitioned for Royal Navy. Renamed <i>Erin</i> . Launched 1913. Displacement 22,940 tons. Speed 21½ knots. Ten 13.5 in., sixteen 6 in. guns.		Rouvier, M. ... ..	19
<i>Revenge</i> ... ..	339, 406	Roy, General ... ..	309, 313
(old) (Renamed <i>Redoubtable</i> later.) Battleship. Launched 1892. Displacement 14,000 tons. Speed 17½ knots. Four 13.5 in., ten 6 in. guns.		<i>Royal Arthur</i> ... ..	580
(new) Dreadnought battleship. Launched 1915. Displacement 25,750 tons. Speed 23 knots. Eight 15 in., fourteen 6 in. guns.		Royal Fleet Reserve ... ..	192
Rheims, Battle of ... ..	1354-8	Royal Flying Corps ... ..	264-5
Ribot, M. ... ..	1154, 1160, 1164, 1167	Royal Fusiliers ... ..	757
Richthofen ... ..	290	Royal Naval Air Service ... ..	264-5
Riddell, Lord ... ..	1141	Royal Naval Division ... ..	238-9
<i>Rinaldo</i> ... ..	337	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve ... ..	192-3
Sloop. Launched 1901. Displacement 980 tons. Speed 13 knots. Six 4 in. guns.		<i>Royalist</i> ... ..	410
Ripon, Lord ... ..	18, 805	Light cruiser. Launched 1914. Displacement 3,500 tons. Speed 29 knots. Two 6 in., six 4 in. guns.	
<i>River Clyde</i> ... ..	756-7	Rupprecht, Prince ... ..	283, 290, 293
<i>Robert E. Lee</i> ... ..	789	Russia ... ..	1118-20
Roberts, Earl ... ..	188-9, 299	—and Constantinople ... ..	617-18
Robertson, Sir William, 530-1, 1098, 1154-5, 1167, 1206-8, 1212-3, 1250, 1259-61.		—recovery of ... ..	1007-11
—his <i>Soldiers and Statesmen</i> , 957-60		Russian Army ... ..	40, 228, 467-72, 527
—succeeds Kitchener ... ..	949	Russian refusal to consent to Greek co-operation in Dardanelles ... ..	620-2
—superseded ... ..	1260	Russian shortness of munitions ... ..	470-1
Ronarc'h, Admiral ... ..	309, 313, 315	Russo-Japanese War ... ..	11, 17, 462-3
<i>Roon</i> ... ..	423		
German cruiser. Launched 1903. Displacement 9,350 tons. Speed 21 knots. Four 8.2 in., ten 5.9 in. guns.			

## S

Sackville-West, General ... ..	1335
'Sacred Way' ... ..	1002
St. Mihiel ... ..	1390
Saint-Seine, Comte de ... ..	176
Salaheddin, Colonel ... ..	680
<i>Salamis</i> ... ..	410
Greek battle-cruiser building in Germany, 1914.	
Salisbury, Marquess of ... ..	8, 15
Salonica ... ..	981-2, 1098-1100, 1396
—allyed army at ... ..	981
Sami Pasha ... ..	759
Samoa ... ..	252, 365-6
Samson, Commander 267, 269-70, 329-30	
Samsonoff (Samsonov) ... ..	228, 467
Samuel, Sir Marcus ... ..	81
Sanders, Liman von, account of defence of Dardanelles, 684-6; also 617, 664-5, 674, 751-5, 759, 842, 864-5, 868, 873-4, 875, 906, 919.	
<i>Saphir</i> ... ..	849

	Page
<i>Sapphire</i> ... ..	354, 545
Light cruiser. Launched 1904. Displacement 3,000 tons. Speed 22 knots. Twelve 4 in. guns.	
Sarrail, General, 231, 283, 290, 292, 888-9, 930, 981, 1098-1101, 1149.	
Sazonoff, M. ... ..	617, 620
Scapa Flow ... ..	342, 351-3, 401-2, 416
Scarborough bombardment ... ..	418-9, 429
<i>Scharnhorst</i> 239, 247-50, 252-55, 364-72, 374-6, 381-2, 384, 386-7, 393-5, 399-400	
German cruiser. Launched 1906. Displacement 11,420 tons. Speed 22½ knots. Eight 8·2 in., six 5·9 in. guns.	
Scheer, Admiral, 197 ( <i>note</i> ), 261-2, 356, 416, 426, 476, 566, 1021, 1030, 1035, 1044, 1049, 1052, 1054, 1056-61, 1064.	
—favours U-boat warfare ... ..	1114
Scheldt ... ..	208, 310
Schleswig-Holstein ... ..	484-5, 488, 534
Schlieffen Plan ... ..	214-5, 288
Schulenberg, Graf von der ... ..	1158, 1276-7
Schwab, Mr. ... ..	410
Schweiger, Commander ... ..	771
Scott, Sir Percy ... ..	545
Seaplanes ... ..	264-70
Seely, General ... ..	1351
Ségur, Comte de ... ..	956
Selborne, Lord ... ..	823
Serbia, 22, 155, 473, 976. <i>See also</i> Balkan States.	
Serri, Captain ... ..	680
<i>Severn</i> ... ..	332
Monitor Launched 1914. Displacement 1,250 tons. Speed 11½ knots. Two 6 in., two 4·7 in. guns.	
<i>Seydlitz</i> , 564-7, 570, 1052, 1054, 1067, 1068	
<i>Shearwater</i> ... ..	250
Canadian sloop. Launched 1901. Displacement 980 tons. Speed 13 knots. Six 4 in. guns.	
Shells ... ..	94-5, 673, 687-8
Shields ... ..	511, 522-3
Signal-books of German Navy conveyed to London ... ..	1020
Silo ... ..	477
Simon, Sir John ... ..	1132
Simpson-Baikie, General ... ..	843
<i>Sir John Moore</i> ... ..	789
Slade, Admiral ... ..	104
Smith, F. E. <i>See</i> Birkenhead, Lord.	
Smith, Sir James Masterton, 155 ( <i>note</i> ), 520, 792, 798, 1174.	

	Page
Smoke ... ..	466, 508-26, 808
Smuts, General, 383, 452, 1170, 1186, 1356, 1359-60.	
—offer by Prime Minister to command armies in Palestine ... ..	1209
Sodenstern ... ..	764
<i>Soldiers and Statesmen</i> , by Robertson, 957-60	
Somme, Battle of the ... ..	1070-92
Souchon, Admiral ... ..	200, 203, 209, 679
South African War ... ..	9, 15
<i>Southampton</i> , 427-8, 1031, 1058, 1059, 1061	
Light cruiser. Launched 1912. Displacement 5,400 tons. Speed 25½ knots. Eight 6 in. guns.	
Southborough, Lord ... ..	81, 104
<i>Sparrowhawk</i> ... ..	1059
Spec, Admiral von ... ..	250-2, 364, 374-9, 382-5, 390, 392-4, 450, 488.
Spenser-Grey, Commander ... .. ( <i>note</i> )	323
Spies ... ..	36, 170-1
<i>Spitfire</i> ... ..	1059
Spring-Rice, Sir Cecil ... ..	735
Stambulisky ... ..	880
Steel ... ..	1192
Stein, General von ... ..	293
<i>Stettin</i> ... ..	262
German light cruiser. Launched 1907. Displacement 3,396 tons. Speed 23½ knots. Ten 4·1 in. guns.	
Stettinius, Mr. ... ..	1337, 1339
Stevenson, Lord ... ..	1177
Stirling, Captain ... ..	1060
Stoddart, Admiral, 369, 371-4, 378-9, 383, 387, 390.	
Stokes gun ... ..	891-2
Stomm, Major ... ..	1338
<i>Stonewall Jackson</i> ... ..	781, 789
Stopford, General ... ..	859, 868-72
<i>Strassburg</i> ... ..	262
German light cruiser. Launched 1911. Displacement 4,500 tons. Speed 27 knots. Twelve 4·1 in. guns.	
Strikes ... ..	1342, 1437
Sturdee, Admiral, 362, 374, 379, 384, 390, 392-3, 407, 531, 536, 732, 746.	
Submarines, 338-9, 342-7, 408-10, 719-736, 1111-8, 1224. <i>See also</i> U-boats.	
Sueter, Commodore ... ..	267, 270
<i>Suffren</i> ... ..	611-2, 639, 641, 644
Sukhomlinoff, General ... ..	471
<i>Superb</i> ... ..	578
Suvla Bay ... ..	858-77, 930
Sweden ... ..	473, 475

	Page
<i>Swift</i> ... ..	107-9, 349
Destroyer leader. Launched 1907.	
Displacement 1,800 tons. Speed	
35 knots. Four 4 in. guns.	
<i>Swilshire</i> , 246-7, 451-2, 541, 542, 623, 635,	
639, 644.	
Battleship. Launched 1903. Dis-	
placement 11,800 tons. Speed 19½	
knots. Four 10 in., fourteen 7.5 in.	
guns.	
Swinton, General, 233, 510, 515, 525, 1082,	
1133.	
<i>Sydney</i> , 248-50, 254-6, 258, 386, 389, 451	
Australian light cruiser. Launched	
1912. Displacement 5,400 tons.	
Speed 25½ knots. Eight 6 in. guns.	
<i>Sylv</i> ... ..	481

## T

Talaat Bey ... ..	432, 436
<i>Talbot</i> ... ..	745-6
Tanks 271, 466, 508-26, 1082-3, 1179,	
1186-7, 1197, 1216-20, 1270-1, 1345-7,	
1351, 1379-81.	
Tannenberg, Battle of ... ..	229-30, 467
Tappen ... ..	229, 293
Tariff Reform ... ..	16
<i>Temeraire</i> ... ..	732
Tennyson-D'Eyncourt, Sir Eustace, 97, 513,	
515-6.	
<i>Thesus</i> ... ..	824, 846
Tholens, Lieutenant ... ..	262
Thomas, Admiral Sir Hugh Evan. <i>See</i>	
Evan-Thomas.	
Thomson, Graeme ... ..	328
<i>Thordis</i> ... ..	732
Thouzelier, Captain ... ..	1150
Thursby, Admiral ... ..	762, 782
<i>Tiger</i> 354, 384, 565-8, 578, 586, 738,	
1028, 1054.	
Battle-cruiser. Launched 1913.	
Displacement 28,000 tons. Speed	
28 knots. Eight 13.5 in., twelve	
6 in. guns.	
<i>Times, The</i> ... ..	784, 1136-7, 1140
<i>Tipperary</i> ... ..	1059
Tirpitz, Admiral von, 24, 34, 48-9, 78, 83,	
86, 88-9, 105, 144-5, 196-7, 199, 262, 423,	
437, 476, 498, 1112-6.	
Togo, Admiral ... ..	64, 98
Tomes, Captain ... ..	868
Torpedo in battle ... ..	1016
Torpedo strength of British and Ger-	
man fleets ... ..	1022
Toul demanded by Germany... ..	117, 165
Townshend, General ... ..	948

	Page
Transport Department ... ..	328-9
Travers-Clarke, General ... ..	1306
Treaty of London ... ..	766
Trench-Rollers ... ..	512
<i>Triad</i> ... ..	871-2
<i>Tribal class</i> ... ..	106
Triple Alliance ... ..	6, 9, 12
Tritton, Sir William ... ..	515
<i>Triumph</i> , 166-7, 247-50, 541-2, 611, 623,	
635, 639, 644, 811.	
Battleship. Launched 1903. Dis-	
placement 11,800 tons. Speed 19½	
knots. Four 10 in., fourteen	
7.5 in. guns.	
Troubridge, Admiral, 90, 201, 203, 206-9	
<i>Tsukuba</i> ... ..	385
Japanese cruiser. Launched 1905.	
Displacement 13,750 tons. Speed	
21 knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in.,	
twelve 4.7 in. guns.	
Tudor, General ... ..	1279-81, 1306, 1344
Tulloch, Captain T. G. ... ..	515
<i>Turbulent</i> ... ..	1060
Turkey ... ..	473-4
—alliance with Germany ... ..	200, 448-9
—Dreadnoughts requisitioned by	
England ... ..	437
—enters the War ... ..	431-57
—Pan-Turks ... ..	435-6
—shortage of ammunition ... ..	673
—'Young Turks' ... ..	435
<i>Turquoise</i> ... ..	849
Tweedmouth, Lord ... ..	55
Tyrrell, Sir William ... ..	160, 305
Tyrwhitt, Admiral, 111, 260-1, 276, 277-8,	
332, 334, 417-8, 559-62, 564-5, 570-1,	
801, 814, 1064, 1065.	

## U

U-boats ... ..	719-36, 928-9, 1111-8
—defeat of ... ..	1222-48
—destroy 13,000 British lives ... ..	1230
—hundreds of their crews rescued	
by British ... ..	1230
<i>See also</i> Submarines.	
<i>Undaunted</i> ... ..	332, 564
Light cruiser. Launched 1914. Dis-	
placement 3,500 tons. Speed 29	
knots. Two 6 in., six 4 in. guns.	
Unionist leaders stipulate for half the	
places and patronage ... ..	802
Unionist Party supports Government,	
August, 1914 ... ..	174, 176
United States, intervention of ... ..	1110-27
United States troops ... ..	1383

	Page
'Unity of Front' ... ..	1005-6
Unwin, Commander ... ..	756
Uscdom, Admiral von ... ..	844-5, 909-10

## V

V4, German destroyer ... ..	1060
<i>Valiant</i> ... ..	105, 1032, 1043-4
Dreadnought battleship. Launched 1914. Displacement 27,500 tons. Speed 25 knots. Eight 15 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
<i>Venerable</i> ... ..	336-7, 782
Battleship. Launched 1899. Displacement 15,000 tons. Speed 18 knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
<i>Vengeance</i> , 385, 407, 541, 611-2, 639, 746	
Battleship. Launched 1899. Displacement 12,950 tons. Speed 18 knots. Four 12 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
Venizelos, M., 440-1, 444, 448, 453, 600, 602, 619, 621-2, 881, 883, 894-5, 925, 979	
Verdun ... ..	117, 165-6, 986, 991-1011
—British troops and ... ..	1000
—French and German losses ... ..	1003-4
<i>Victorious</i> ... ..	541, 729
Villiers, Sir F. ... ..	304-6, 308
Vimy Ridge ... ..	1164
Von der Goltz, General ... ..	681
Von der Marwitz ... ..	298
<i>Von der Tann</i> ... ..	1027

## W

War, truths of ... ..	975
Warren, Commander C. ... ..	849
Warrender, Sir George ... ..	419-21, 423
<i>Warrior</i> , 203, 385, 399, 450, 578, 1040, 1041, 1043, 1048.	
Cruiser. Launched 1905. Displacement 13,550 tons. Speed 23 knots. Six 9.2 in., four 7.5 in. guns.	
<i>Warspite</i> ... ..	105, 1032, 1048
Dreadnought battleship. Launched 1913. Displacement 27,500 tons. Speed 25 knots. Eight 15 in., twelve 6 in. guns.	
Watts, Sir Philip, 80, 97, 99, 107-8, 110	
<i>Wear</i> ... ..	644
Webb, Captain ... ..	353
Weber, General ... ..	842
Weddigen, Commander ... ..	278, 732
Wedgwood, Commander ... ..	756
Weir, Lord ... ..	1321

Wells, H. G. ... ..	Page 514
Wemyss, Admiral, appeals to Admiralty for permission to force Straits, 780, 920-1; and Admiral de Robeck, 635-7, 928; also 258, 604, 636-7, 656, 660, 668, 909-11, 913, 914, 918-22, 928.	
Westel-Wemyss, Admiral Lord, 984, 1239	
<i>Westfalen</i> ... ..	1061
Westminster, Duke of ... ..	235, 513
Weygand, General ... ..	1325, 1360
<i>Weymouth</i> ... ..	247, 383, 385-6
Light cruiser. Launched 1910. Displacement 5,250 tons. Speed 24½ knots. Eight 6 in. guns.	
Whitby bombardment ... ..	429
White, Sir W. ... ..	82
<i>Wiesbaden</i> ... ..	1041, 1043, 1048
<i>Wildfire</i> ... ..	337
Sloop. Launched 1888. Displacement 1,140 tons. Speed 14 knots.	
William, German Emperor, 9, 19, 24, 72, 74, 75, 78, 83-5, 165, 229-30, 262, 285, 293, 297, 497-500, 1114, 1276, 1356, 1363	
William, Crown Prince, 48, 290, 292-3, 296, 995-6, 1158-9.	
William the Conqueror ... ..	982-3
Williams, General ... ..	84-5
Willmer, Major ... ..	164-5
Wilmot, Sir E. ... ..	80
Wilson, Sir Arthur K., 53, 62-4, 109, 119, 360-2, 382, 397, 401-2, 416, 420, 481, 483-4, 490, 517, 543, 559-61, 564, 577, 581, 633, 645, 648, 726, 729, 746, 796-7, 800, 805, 1018-9.	
—character sketch ... ..	58-60
—and Dardanelles ... ..	538-40
—letter to Mr. Asquith refusing to undertake office of First Sea Lord unless under Mr. Churchill 63, 803-4	
—opposes creation of Naval War Staff ... ..	60
—view of British plan in event of war ... ..	41
Wilson, Havelock ... ..	1344
Wilson, Sir Henry, states his view of the German plan for attacking France, 39-40; also 36, 39, 40, 215, 217, 218, 283, 1212, 1260-1, 1263-5, 1290-2, 1308, 1311, 1325, 1366, 1376.	
Wilson, Major ... ..	515
Wilson, President ... ..	1123-6
—action in speeding despatch of American troops ... ..	1335-6
—approached for an armistice ... ..	1397
Women as munition workers ... ..	1171
Worcester Regiment ... ..	757

